

Tunis refuses landing for Israeli plane

TUNIS (AP) — Tunisia, long expected to be one of the first Arab countries to normalise ties with Israel, denied landing rights to an Israeli plane carrying peace negotiators, Israeli and Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) officials said Tuesday. The plane carrying Israeli negotiators Uzi Savir, Jacques Neriah and Uzi Dayan was forced to divert to Rome on Monday. They later joined American envoy Dennis Ross in Rome and flew to Tunis on a U.S. government plane. The negotiators subsequently left Tunisia with Mr. Ross after failing to persuade Yasser Arafat to return to the peace talks in the wake of last month's massacre at a mosque in Hebron. Since the Palestinians signed their self-rule accord with Israel, the Israelis usually have travelled on commercial flights via Europe or Egypt. It was not clear why they tried to fly on an Israeli plane this time, but it may have been intended as a test of Tunisian policy. In 1985, Israeli warplanes bombed the PLO headquarters in Tunis, killing at least 61 Palestinians and 12 Tunisians. Three years later Mr. Arafat's military mastermind and trusted aide, Khalil Al Wazir, was assassinated in his Tunis villa by Israeli commandos.

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Rabin, Arafat to visit Moscow in April

MOSCOW (R) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin have both accepted invitations from President Boris Yeltsin to visit Moscow in April, a senior Russian diplomat said on Tuesday. The visits would not be simultaneous, Viktor Gokitidze, deputy head of the Foreign Ministry's Middle East Department, told a news conference. Mr. Gokitidze said Mr. Arafat has been invited to come to Moscow on April 19 and Mr. Rabin on April 24-26. "The invitations were accepted with gratitude and we consider that on these dates we will receive the leaders of the PLO and Israel in Moscow," he said. Mr. Gokitidze said that both the PLO and Israel were ready to resume peace talks, stalled after the Hebron mosque massacre, but Mr. Arafat wanted to link the resumption of talks to adoption of a U.N. Security Council resolution denouncing the killings. Mr. Gokitidze accompanied Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev on a lightning visit to Tunis and Israel last week.

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Gaza Fatah chief visits Knesset

TEL AVIV (R) — The leader of Fatah in the occupied Gaza Strip made an unprecedented visit to Israel's parliament (Knesset) on Tuesday with a message that peace and Jewish settlements were incompatible. Sufian Abu Zaidah said Israel had to understand that the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) suspended peace talks because a settler's slaughter of 60 Palestinians in the West Bank on Feb. 25 proved a longstanding fear. "We always thought that peace with settlers and settlements remaining was impossible. The massacre in Hebron proved that point and because of that the negotiations stopped," Mr. Abu Zaidah told reporters at the parliament building. Members of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's Labour Party invited Mr. Abu Zaidah and his delegation to make the visit.

Leotard visits Jeddah

DUBAI (R) — French Defence Minister Francois Leotard paid a lightning visit to Saudi Arabia, which has been critical of Europe's stance on the former Yugoslav republic of Bosnia. The Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said on Tuesday Mr. Leotard met King Fahd in Jeddah and Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan after visiting Bosnia with French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur. He left the Kingdom late on Monday. Saudi Arabia has repeatedly criticised European reluctance to defend Bosnia's beleaguered Muslims and these concerns were expressed to Mr. Balladur during talks with King Fahd in January.

Sudan rebel leader seeks world help

ROME (R) — A Sudanese rebel leader said on Tuesday that rival guerrillas in Africa's biggest country had resolved their most serious conflicts, and urged world leaders to help them win independence from Khartoum. "We call upon the international community to (make) the government of Sudan commit itself to a peaceful settlement of the conflict instead of waging war," said Riek Machar, leader of one faction of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). Speaking to reporters, Mr. Machar accused the Khartoum government of mounting a dry season offensive aimed at killing and displacing innocent civilians.

9 Somalis killed

MOGADISHU (R) — Indian peacekeepers troops shot dead nine Somali bandits who attacked a relief convoy on Tuesday in a fresh surge of lawlessness. A Zimbabwean peacekeeper was shot dead outside his camp in the village of Afgoye, near Mogadishu, but the details were not yet known. U.N. officials said U.N. military spokesman Major Chris Budge told reporters that 14 bandits raked the convoy with gunfire as it headed for the inland town of Baidoa. "The escorting troops returned fire and five (were) wounded by helicopter and nine were killed," Maj. Budge told reporters. The Indians who are based in Baidoa, the town once at the heart of Somalia's famine, were travelling with a 16-vehicle Irish convoy at the time. Peacekeepers confiscated machine guns, rifles and a rocket launcher.

Clinton extends ban on testing

NASHUA (AP) — President Clinton has extended a moratorium on U.S. nuclear weapons testing for a year, through September 1995, the White House announced Tuesday. The announcement came during a visit by the president to New Hampshire. The current nuclear testing moratorium was to expire at the end of this September. Among the factors leading to the extension, said White House Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers, was restraint showed by other nuclear powers "in not responding to China's nuclear test last October."

Palestinian security more important than resumed talks — PLO

Rabin heads for U.S.; Peres says April timetable may not be met; Arabs dismayed over Security Council vote delay

TUNIS (Agencies) — Protection for Palestinians against Jewish settlers in Israeli-occupied territories is more important than any deal for resuming talks with Israel, a Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official said on Tuesday.

"No one can threaten us with the time factor, because

Palestinians' security is more important than time and than any accord," PLO Executive Committee member Yasser Abed-Rabbo told Reuters.

Mr. Abed-Rabbo was speaking after talks on Monday between U.S. envoy Dennis Ross and PLO leader Yasser Arafat in which Mr. Ross pressed the PLO to resume negotiations on

implementing the PLO-Israel peace deal signed in Washington last September (see page 2).

The negotiations, intended to lead to Palestinian self-rule in parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, stopped after a Jewish settler massacre about 60 Palestinian worshippers in a Hebron mosque on Feb. 25.

PLO officials said the Arafat-Rosso meeting failed to achieve a breakthrough because the U.S. envoy could not give sufficient commitments on security measures for Palestinians in occupied territories.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin left for Washington Tuesday hoping to rescue the peace talks.

Before heading for the United States to meet President Bill Clinton on Wednesday, Mr. Rabin told army radio: "I know the American effort is to bring about a process that will get the talks back on track."

Since the massacre, Israel has cracked down on hardcore militant Jews, detaining some without trial, disarming and limiting the movements of others and outlawing two anti-Arab groups.

But the PLO said more was needed to ensure the safety of Palestinians.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said the Rabin-Clinton meeting might provide the breakthrough which escaped the Arafat-Rosso meeting.

"I see some difficulties and I see an air of crisis, but in my judgement we didn't reach a deadend," Mr. Peres told reporters.

"They want some more measures as a result of the event in

Israeli interpretation of Oslo deal a key hurdle

By Michael Jansen

ISRAEL'S deliberate misinterpretation of provisions in the Oslo accord has become what an authoritative PLO source said is "one of the issues" preventing the return by the Palestinians to the peace talks.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said Monday that there could be no discussion of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories for "two years," in accordance with the Oslo accord. He also said that the PLO's demand for urgent discussion of the settlements, which Palestinians consider a threat to their security, amounted to a "contravention" of the Oslo accord which, according to Israel, specifies that such negotiations are not due to begin before the end of the second year of the interim period. However, it is Israel's own misinterpretation of the accord which calls into question the adherence of Mr. Rabin and his government to the accord signed in Washington last September.

The PLO source said Palestinian negotiators during discussions with the three-man

Israeli delegation in Tunis last weekend countered this Israeli misinterpretation by referring to the text of the Oslo accord which states in paragraph 2 article V: "Permanent status negotiations will commence as soon as possible, but not later than the beginning of the third year of the interim period..." And paragraph 3: "It is understood that these negotiations shall cover remaining issues, including: Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements..."

Basing themselves on the Oslo accord, the Palestinians asked for prompt establishment of a committee to begin discussions on settlements, a demand Israel has refused. Such refusal would seem to violate the intention if not the letter of the Oslo accord; this intention being that such negotiations "will commence as soon as possible."

According to the source, the PLO has, unfortunately, permitted the Israeli misinterpretation of the accord to stand in the public mind by failing to correct Israel and call the world's attention to what the Oslo accord really says.

U.N. may consider Iraq oil ban soon — Russian diplomat

MOSCOW (Agencies) — The United Nations may consider lifting a ban on Iraqi oil exports soon, rewarding Baghdad for progress in eliminating its weapons of mass destruction, a senior Russian diplomat told Interfax news agency on Tuesday.

A special U.N. commission monitoring Iraq's disarmament over the past two years had reached conclusions that were "generally favourable for Iraq," he said.

"This gives a formal pretext for raising the question in the Security Council of lifting the oil embargo," he added.

The report, suggesting Moscow supported some easing of the embargo against its former ally, comes ahead of a U.N. Security Council meeting, scheduled for March 16 or 17, to review sanctions imposed after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

The diplomat believed the oil embargo would not be lifted "immediately." Baghdad could be given a trial period pending a final decision, he said.

The Russian Foreign Ministry's press service could not immediately comment on the report.

The diplomat said Moscow, once a major supplier of arms and other goods to Iraq, wanted "a positive decision" on the oil embargo, whose lifting would contribute to a glut that has depressed world prices.

"This would allow us to begin recovering Iraqi debts," the diplomat said the debts were estimated at about \$6 billion.

Other non-oil sanctions could remain in force until Baghdad recognised the sovereignty and borders of Kuwait, he said.

Russia, which backed the West in imposing and maintaining the sanctions, has been pursuing a more forceful and independent foreign policy line since communists and nationalists won strong support in December parliamentary elections.

The foreign ministry has said a trial period for Iraq should be no more than six months, after which Russia would be prepared to examine the issue of lifting the oil embargo in accordance with clause 22 of Security Council Resolution 687.

Moscow has told Iraq, which has been campaigning for an end to the embargo, that it must bow fully to Security Council demands.

The United States, which led the coalition that defeated Iraqi forces in the Gulf war, has taken a harder line than other council members in opposing lifting the sanctions.

Washington has signalled it wants Iraq to comply with more demands than just destroying its weapons.

Other Western powers have noted Iraqi cooperation with the U.N. resolution calling for elimination of weapons of mass destruction. But they say Baghdad has failed to comply with other demands, including a resolution on the inviolability of Iraq's border with Kuwait.

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz left Amman for New York on Tuesday for talks with U.N. officials on monitoring destruction of Baghdad's weapons.

Adel Ibrahim, a spokesman for the Iraqi embassy in Amman, said Mr. Aziz will head an Iraqi delegation that started talks at the United Nations on Monday.

Gen. Amer Rashid, head of Iraq's Military-Industrial Commission, launched the talks with Rolf Ekeus, a Swedish diplomat. Mr. Ekeus heads the U.N. Special Commission monitoring the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Diplomats close to the U.N. talks expressed optimism, but acknowledged that differences remain.

Officials of the U.N. weapons monitoring team said Mr. Ekeus planned to meet with Mr. Aziz, probably on Wednesday.

Diplomats said that among the issues needed to be discussed this week include so-called "dual-purpose" sites, which could have a civilian use but could be altered to make weapons materials.

U.N. and Iraqi officials also intend to work up a blueprint on monitoring activities, including plans for photographing various sites.

Mr. Ekeus has said he would need to see six months of full compliance by Iraq with weapons monitoring resolutions before he could recommend the lifting of the oil embargo. Diplomats could not indicate when that six-month period would begin.



HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS Crown Prince Hassan is escorted upon his arrival in Zagreb, Croatia, on Monday by Major General Ghazi Tayeb (left), the Jordanian official who commands the U.N. force in Croatia, and unidentified others (AFP photo)

Israeli forces kill Palestinian

OCCUPIED GAZA (Agencies) — Israeli border police shot dead a Palestinian and seriously wounded another in a gunbattle on Tuesday in the occupied Gaza Strip, military sources said.

The Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, had vowed earlier to carry out attacks on Tuesday to avenge a Jewish settler's massacre of 60 Palestinians at a Hebron mosque in the West Bank last month.

The sources said the Palestinians fired from an orchard at a police vehicle, spurring the Israeli return fire. No policemen were hurt.

Hamas vowed last week to attack four Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip unless their residents moved out by March 15.

In Tekoa, a community of 180 mainly immigrant families with a strong core of settlers from English-speaking coun-

tries, the Hamas threat appeared to have fallen on deaf ears.

A lone soldier stood guard, as usual, at the gate to the settlement, situated between Bethlehem and Hebron.

For its mostly religious residents, Tekoa is an expression of their claim to a "Biblical right to the land of Israel."

For Palestinians, the settlement of red-roofed villas and scruffy caravans is a blot on the stark, rocky landscape and another example of Israeli domination.

Thick yellow lines painted at crossroads mark the way to Tekoa, to ensure that Israelis do not make a wrong turn into Palestinian communities.

Children sang in its nursery school and those taking the bus home to nearby settlements were escorted, as they are every day, by a military command car on a winding road through Arab villages.

Levinger taken to court in Israeli gesture to woo Palestinians to talks

Thousands demonstrate against Rabin

KIRYAT ARBA, Occupied West Bank (AP) — Rabbi Moshe Levinger, the militant founder of the Jewish settlement movement in the occupied territories, was hauled into court Tuesday on charges of ignoring army orders. Palestinians still simmering about the massacre clashed with troops.

The Israeli army was heavily deployed in the occupied territories, on alert for attacks because Tuesday was the deadline given in a leaflet by a Palestinian group for settlers to abandon about half a dozen Jewish settlements or face attack.

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of right-wing demonstrators, many of them settlers from the occupied lands, defied the threat of Hamas attack to rally against the government's peace policies in Tel Aviv.

The protesters, many with rifles slung over their shoulders, marched from the city's main square to the defense ministry nearby, pushing baby carriages, waving torches and Israeli flags and shouting slo-

gans against Mr. Rabin.

Several demonstrators were reportedly arrested when the crowd spilled over from the Kings of Israel square and blocked one of the city's main thoroughfares. Later, police blocked off area streets as protesters marched to the defense ministry, hampering downtown traffic in the country's main city.

During the rally, demonstrators waved posters claiming Mr. Rabin doesn't have a mandate to make concessions to the Palestinians.

The crowd booed opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu when he called the Hebron massacre a crime and cheered when he told them, "If we don't have the right to live in Hebron we don't have the right to live anywhere in this country."

Demonstrators burned Palestinian flags and Israeli television reported four people carrying posters of the anti-Arab Kach group were arrested.

Clashes erupted in Jerusalem and in the Gaza Strip. On east Jerusalem's main Arab

shopping artery troops fired tear-gas at youths throwing rocks at them.

In Gaza, two armed men hiding in a gas station opened fire on a passing army jeep that was part of stepped up patrols. Soldiers chased them into the town of Beit Lahia and shot both of them, killing one and seriously wounding another, according to army and Palestinian reports.

Kiryat Arba, a settlement of 8,000, was one of half a dozen threatened in the leaflet published by the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, after the massacre. Resident Baruch Goldstein murdered at least 60 Palestinian worshippers at the Ibrahim Mosque.

Several security roadblocks were added Tuesday along the 45-kilometre road between Jerusalem and Kiryat Arba. Soldiers scanned the settlement constantly with binoculars.

Hebron, has been kept under curfew, its 110,000 Palestinian residents confined indoors for most of the 19 days since the massacre took place.

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Crown Prince visits Sarajevo

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan was received with all the ceremonies the battered Bosnian capital of Sarajevo could muster Tuesday.

He responded by urging support for international diplomatic efforts to end the city's siege and the country's brutal 23-month ethnic war.

"King Hussein and the Jordanian people extend their deepest sympathies for your suffering and the suffering of the people of Sarajevo," Prince Hassan said in remarks to Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic.

The Crown Prince was welcomed by Mr. Izetbegovic and a Bosnian army honour guard as he stepped from his armoured car onto a tattered and slightly stained yellow carpet and strode into Bosnia's shrapnel-pocked presidency building.

After their meeting, Mr. Izetbegovic thanked the Prince for Jordan's support during the war, especially for sheltering 400 Bosnian refugees.

The Bosnian president used the occasion to renew his call for a just peace to end the Bosnian conflict.

He said such a peace should include the return of occupied territories, the return of refugees to their homes and the punishment of war criminals, "not as revenge, but as an act of justice to pave the way for possible reconciliation."

Crown Prince Hassan had visited Croatian President Franjo Tudjman in Zagreb on Monday, where he also met Yasushi Akashi, the U.N. special envoy to the former Yugoslavia, and the new U.N. peacekeeping commander, General Bertrand de Lapresle.

The Prince used his stop in Sarajevo to visit some of the 3,000 Jordanian troops doing U.N. duty in Croatia and Bosnia.

A number of the Jordanians were recently reassigned to the Bosnian capital to help consolidate a successful five-week old ceasefire between Muslim-led government troops and Serbs besieging the city.

President Izetbegovic paid tribute to Jordan's efforts in the peacekeeping mission and for its hosting 400 Bosnian families and wounded who were treated at Jordanian hospitals.

Later in a statement to the press, the Crown Prince said that more Jordanian troops would be sent to serve with the U.N. force in Bosnia.

Prince Hassan was scheduled to visit a war shelter in the Croatian town of Lipik near the border with Bosnia.

Prince Hassan had donated \$10,000 to the reconstruction of the shelter, which was destroyed by Serbian shells. His donation attracted philanthropic institutions in Canada, the U.S., Switzerland, the United Kingdom, New Zealand,

(Continued on page 3)

Rights group charges settlers above the law

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — An Israeli human rights group charged Tuesday that the army and police had failed to adequately investigate settler attacks on Palestinians for years, fostering an atmosphere that led to the Hebron mosque massacre.

The 131-page report by Betselem detailed what researchers called an institutionalised double standard where settlers, even when they broke the law, were seen as allies in controlling the occupied territories whereas Arabs were stigmatised as criminals.

Betselem also charged there was confusion in the army about how to handle settlers who got violent, with statements by top generals about enforcing the law not always reflected in the orders that soldiers got in

the field.

The report follows the Jan. 25 massacre in a Hebron mosque, when settler Baruch Goldstein gunned down at least 60 Palestinian worshippers.

"Goldstein's act did not take place in a vacuum, but was the result of ongoing incitement to harm the Palestinians and what's worse, a chain of violent incidents by settlers against Palestinians with frequent and illegal use of weapons," said Gila Zvirsky, the head of Betselem.

They army said it was studying the report and would respond later. The police issued a statement saying investigators treated Palestinians and Israelis the same, and would respond further when it had a chance to study the report.

Settlers frequently say they feel vulnerable to attacks because the army does not do enough to protect them.

The report said that in a study of the 48 cases from 1988 to 1992 when Palestinians were killed by settlers, only 12 made it to court. It said 27 were dropped, police could not find the files for two and the rest were ongoing.

The report said settlers convicted received lenient sentences, far lighter than the penalties handed down to Palestinians sent through the military court system for similar crimes.

Of eight convicted in Palestinian deaths, sentences ranged from one life sentence to six-months public service. At least 27 cases were dropped and police could not find the files

for two, it said.

In most cases the settlers fired after being stoned or stabbed by Palestinians, but only four were in life-threatening situations, Eitan Felner, an author of the report, told reporters.

Mr. Felner noted that little has been done to rectify the leniency towards settlers since a report by the attorney general's office complained about the problem in 1984.

Betselem said that the current detention orders against eight extremist settlers and banning two groups, Kach and Kahane Lives, did not go far enough to stopping the problem. It recommended that the full weight of the law be used against anyone involved in violence in the occupied territories.

U.S. working to bring parties back to Mideast peace process — Gore

WASHINGTON — The United States is actively involved in drafting a United Nations Security Council resolution concerning the Hebron massacre that will help bring the parties to the Middle East peace process back to the negotiating table, Vice President Albert Gore said March 15.

"If this resolution can be developed in the right spirit, it may allow both parties to rejoin each other at the negotiating table and to resume the process which Hebron threatens to destroy," Gore said in a speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's (AIPAC) annual policy conference.

President Clinton "is working hard to achieve a resolution that will condemn the massacre, that will promote the peace process, preserve our policy towards Israel on sensitive issues like Jerusalem, and build a future of hope in the region," Mr. Gore said.

The following is an unofficial transcript of Gore's remarks: Mr. Gore: I wish I could go on and acknowledge individually the friends who are here who are personally important to me because of the relationships that I have had the privilege and honour of building up over the years. As a matter of fact, I think of all of the individuals in this group to whom I am personally close. I think I've heard from all of you within the last 48 hours, as a matter of fact.

It's been an interesting year. I have to begin by saying that, I have enjoyed and been honoured by the privilege to serve as vice president of the United States. I appreciate those of you who made it possible for me to serve in this capacity and for Bill Clinton to serve as president. We've been trying very hard to do a good job. I have participated actively as we have fought battle after battle this year. I have even had a chance to vote a few times, you may have noticed, in the Congress.

I was explaining to those in the Democratic caucus the other day that the experience of being able to vote this year, this past year, has had a tremendous impact on my whole outlook on life. It's made me a much more optimistic and positive person because I've noticed a pattern. Typically, it has been almost completely ignored by the news media. But if you think about it carefully, as I told my colleagues, every time I vote, we win. It's been a wonderfully lifting experience.

A lot of other things have happened. In the past year, I've had a chance to engage in a debate — I had a chance to be attacked by Louis Farrakhan — and I've had the great privilege of being able to continue my warm relationship with so many of you in talking about the issue of peace in the Middle East and talking about the other struggles that we have and that are important to progress.

I dare say everyone in this room has had two dreams of peace. The first has been to see Israel secure within its borders. That's number one. The second to see Israel at peace with and secure among its neighbours.

America has tried to make the first dream a reality by helping Israel meet its requirements for military security and to realise the second through our diplomacy. That is why there has been no moment in my political experience more stirring than the moment when Prime Minister Rabin and

Chairman Arafat stood on the White House lawn last September with President Clinton and shook hands. That was the moment when the two dreams began to come together and merge with reality. It was a stunning demarcation line between war and peace, between despair and hope.

It would be a heartbreaking irony if in Hebron, whose very name derives from the Hebrew word for "friend," such hopes could be dashed by one enemy of peace walking into a mosque carrying grenades and an assault rifle. Is that the end? Have we returned to an unending series of days when bombs blow up school buses and when soldiers have to disperse crowds with tear gas and rubber bullets?

The president has been working hard to prevent the Hebron massacre from ending our dreams. He knows that we cannot lose the momentum that we have developed. He knows we cannot lose the sense of direction that we have had. We're doing everything we possibly can to ensure that the spirit of September 13 will survive the assault of a man whose target was not just worshippers, but the peace process itself.

I'd like to talk to you today briefly about how we're trying to achieve that goal. First of all, at the most fundamental level, there is the fact that U.S.-Israel relations are as good or better than they have ever been. It is remarkable to note that, as I look back over this first year of our administration, there have been precious few areas of disagreement between the United States and Israel.

Instead we have deepened and strengthened our relationship to the point where it is probably the closest that we have with any of our friends and allies anywhere in the world. We want to keep it that way.

Incidentally, I do appreciate the personal ties in this group that I referred to earlier, and I remember very well hosting many of you at my house in Arlington as Tipper and I welcomed the executive committee on a very cold day. It was extremely cold, but I couldn't remember a warmer gathering. We have a different house, but if I am honoured enough to hold another reception for AIPAC, the reception up there at 34th and Massachusetts will be just as warm as it was out in Arlington, Virginia, and I look forward to that.

Go return to my central point, we support Israel because it is our major democratic ally with strategic and ideological and cultural ties that grow stronger each year. This administration has engaged in a deep and sustained effort to build the peace process and to make sure that it gains momentum. Obviously, it did not start last September, nor is it strictly the result of the work of the Clinton-Gore administration. America is but one of the many parties acting in the Middle East drama.

As President Clinton himself acknowledged last September, even when it comes to our specific role, others deserve credit as well, from President Carter for bringing Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin to Camp David, to President Bush for initiating the Madrid process.

From the beginning of his administration, though, President Clinton has been deeply committed to doing whatever is possible to keep the process moving forward towards our goal of a comprehensive and

secure peace for Israel and its Arab neighbours. Months of vigorous diplomacy by the United States preceded the Rabin-Arafat breakthrough of last September. The force that had been impelling them towards each other was operating within the context of an underlying American diplomatic effort.

Norwegian Foreign Minister Johan Holst in particular also played a critical role in steering two parties already moving towards each other into final contact in a brilliant accomplishment. Once the opportunity of September 13th presented itself, President Clinton acted at once to encourage a momentum to carry both parties towards final closure. He cannot impose a solution and will not on Israel or on the Palestinians. Only they, only the parties themselves can reach an agreement. Our role has been to help, to facilitate the process, to create the circumstances in which the parties can arrive at an agreement.

It is no accident that President Clinton has been mobilising American resources to sustain Israeli security while at the same time mobilising international financial resources to provide for the development of an economic infrastructure in Gaza and Jericho. Our activities have been designed to make real the possibility of secure and normal lives for all peoples of the region.

Have there been discouraging moments? Of course. But as Secretary Christopher worked with both parties through the issues arising from the Declaration of Principles, we were encouraged. We felt the problems were yielding, that we were making slow and steady progress. And then came Hebron.

In the wake of the massacre, the president stepped forward in a public way. He did not have to do it. He took a particularly large risk by immediately inviting negotiators to move from Cairo and Tabat to Washington. Over the last few days, much attention has been focused on the United Nations Security Council and the resolution on the Hebron massacre being drafted there.

We're actively involved in the drafting process and in the detailed negotiations surrounding that process. If this resolution can be developed in the right spirit, it may allow both parties to rejoin each other at the negotiating table and to resume the process which Hebron threatens to destroy.

Badly handled, on the other hand, this resolution can even more deeply signify the division between the parties and create a new and formidable obstacle to negotiations at the worst possible moment.

Obviously, I cannot go into a great many details right now while the process is underway because it is a very fluid situation. But the president is working hard to achieve a resolution that will condemn the massacre, that will promote the peace process, preserve our policy towards Israel on sensitive issues like Jerusalem, and build a future of hope in the region.

The reason I didn't acknowledge Steve Grossman at the beginning of my talk, incidentally, is that he is down at the White House at this moment talking with President Clinton.

I want to say that we are working actively with the Palestinians and the Israelis to ensure that passage of a U.N. resolution is not an isolated event. There must be an immediate return to the negotia-

tions so that the Declaration of Principles can be implemented as soon as possible. This is a tight, difficult passage for our diplomacy. We need the support of our friends. And in asking for that support, I want to assure you at this critical moment that the president and I have not forgotten the meaning of Jerusalem.

I want to say that I cannot be sure what will happen in the future, but I am optimistic that the parties will return to the negotiating table. And there is a lot of work to do. We want to match the progress which has been made in Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy with similar progress on negotiations with Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.

With regard to Lebanon, for example, we attach great importance to the existence of a sovereign and independent Lebanon as part of the Middle East. We support full implementation of the Taif Accord and withdrawal of all foreign forces.

We welcome President Assad's public affirmation of Syria's "strategic decision for peace and for normal, peaceful relations with Israel." But Syria needs to do more. It must engage the government and people of Israel in the only kind of dialogue that can establish the basis for lasting peace and security, one that involves both the words and deeds of peace.

And there is one deed that would carry special weight. We are determined to see that the single most offensive relic of the past, the Arab boycott, is ended now.

I want to reiterate, as we work to achieve the goal of peace in the Middle East, we are guided by the fundamental principle which forms the basis for the peace process: our absolute commitment to Israel's security and to close U.S.-Israel relations. The president told Prime Minister Rabin in their first meeting, a year ago this month — that first meeting as president that he had with him, that as Israel took risks for peace, the United States would be there to minimize those risks.

Prime Minister Rabin's steps have been bold, and the president has kept his promise. We have moved to enhance Israel's high technology capabilities and qualitative edge by maintaining Israel's \$3-billion annual assistance levels in the face of unprecedented global reductions in our aid budget. We have approved Israeli participation in U.S. commercial space launch ventures, authorised the transfer of advanced computers to Israel, established the U.S.-Israel Science and Technology Commission. We have also worked to strengthen Israel's defence and deterrence ability by working together on an anti-ballistic missile defence system and by transferring F-16s and by authorising the sale of advanced F-15s. The security of Israel is important to us, and we make no bones about it.

We have also worked on a range of other issues, economic, scientific, and one that is an issue that I've worked personally on for many years, the environment. And I've had many interesting meetings with Foreign Minister Peres, who is dedicated to this particular issue. As I've written, I've always admired the way Israel has worked to reclaim degraded land. It is one of the great environmental success stories of history. And I look

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Two Israeli soldiers arrest a Palestinian boy after he threw stones at an Israeli patrol in the occupied Gaza Strip (AFP photo)

Hebron massacre dominates 'Eid Al Fitr celebrations

RIYADH (AP) — Muslim leaders marked the 'Eid Al Fitr holiday with calls for unity and renewed condemnation of the mosque massacre of Palestinian worshippers in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

In a traditional message to his subjects, Saudi Arabia's King Fahd lamented "the wounds of the Islamic Nation that are growing deeper and bleeding heavier by the day."

He mentioned Bosnia, Somalia and Afghanistan, but emphasised the plight of Palestinians against whom "the hand of perfidy and crime" was extended at the Hebron mosque.

About worshippers were mowed down by a Jewish extremist at the Hebron Mosque on Feb. 25.

Eid Al Fitr marks the end of the month of Ramadan, during which Muslims observe a dawn-to-dusk fast, refraining from eating, drinking smoking and sex.

The three-day holiday normally is marked by the exchange of gifts among relatives and lavish banquets. But this year, the mosque massacre cast a gloomy atmosphere in many countries.

In a separate Eid message, the king's brother, Crown Prince Abdullah, appealed for inter-Arab reconciliation.

"Today more than ever, it is demanded of us that we shed the differences and the attitudes that ripped the (Arab) Nation apart, and pursue cooperation and frankness," he said.

The Arabs world has been split since Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

Saudi Arabia has gradually

reconciled with some of the Arab parties that showed sympathy for Iraq, but not all.

Fundamentalist Iran, which regards itself the defender of Islamic causes, said Islamic unity was the only answer to "the unjust order... of world arrogance." Tehran's usual reference to the United States.

"If the Islamic Nation had been united to a certain extent and had taken a single position against the crime of the Zionist regime (at Hebron), the international bodies certainly would not have ignored Muslim sentiments to this extent," Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said.

The United States has sought repeated delays in the U.N. Security Council vote on the Hebron massacre, seeking to pressure the Palestinians, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon to first resume peace talks with Israel which have been suspended.

Libyan leader Moammar Qadhafi said "the Christian World" was blocking a resolution on the massacre and added that the United States had forfeited its right to talk about human rights.

"The U.S.A. has lost all credibility when it refused to condemn Israel... For them, the Israelis are above the U.N. charter," he said in his 'Eid message.

In Hebron, Palestinians marked the first day of the feast by visiting the graves of the massacre victims and criticism of the Security Council.

"Anybody who runs the Security Council is stupid and a collaborator because this institution will not give us jus-

tice. The Security Council decisions are only on paper," Salah Razim, a prayer leader in Hebron, told an 800-strong congregation.

In Lebanon, where a church bomb explosion killed 10 worshippers two days after the Hebron mosque massacre, Muslim clerics marked the feast with unanimous calls for solidarity with the country's Christians.

"The church bomb blast three weeks ago was aimed at all Lebanese, Christians and Muslims, to undermine Lebanon's unity," said Sheikh Mohammad Kabbani, spiritual head of Lebanon's Sunni Muslim community.

Sheikh Kabbani and other preachers all repeated claims that Israel masterminded the bombing north of Beirut to defile the international uproar over the Hebron massacre.

Some governments marked the feast with amnesties for prisoners. The Saudi Interior Ministry announced the release of 265 Saudis and 179 non-Saudis from its jails, and Morocco's King Hassan II pardoned or reduced the sentences of 138 prisoners.

In Bahrain, the ruler, Sheikh Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, decreed that an unspecified number of Bahrainis would be removed from a blacklist.

Bahraini opposition members have fled police crackdowns over the years, they have not been allowed to return.

Sheikh Isa allowed a batch of 64 blacklisted people to return in 1992.

Arafat meets Ross

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — U.S. Special Middle East coordinator Ambassador Dennis Ross met Monday in Tunis with Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat as part of the U.S. effort to reconvene the talks between the PLO and Israel on implementation of their agreement on the declaration of principles, State Department Deputy Spokesman Christine Shelly said.

"The purpose of this brief trip... is to continue those discussions which are still aimed at getting the negotiations back on track," Ms. Shelly emphasised.

She noted that Secretary of State Warren Christopher, while on his Asian trip last weekend, talked by phone with officials in the Mideast, including Mr. Arafat, and subsequently asked Mr. Ross to meet with Mr. Arafat.

She also noted that the United States in recent weeks has made it very clear that "we would like Arafat to agree to resume the discussions as soon as possible."

On another topic, she said the Israeli cabinet decision to ban two Jewish extremist groups, "should be seen in the context of the overall efforts by the Israeli government to address the security concerns of the Palestinians."

"It is our view that by their words and actions, members of the Kach party and Kahane Chai (the banned groups) have advocated and engaged in terrorism and violence," the deputy spokesman said.

She added that the United States is considering what actions it might take concerning these groups.

"The United States condemns acts of terrorism and those who commit or condone them," she emphasised. "We specifically condemned the Hebron massacre of February 25, when an Israeli settler gunned down 29 Muslims at prayer."

The Israeli government outlawed on Sunday two radical Jewish groups rooted in the Arab-hating doctrine of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane, branding them terrorist organisations on a par with Islamic militants like Hamas.

It was a Kahane disciple, Dr. Baruch Goldstein, who massacred Muslims at prayer in a Hebron mosque on Feb. 25.

Relying on antiterrorist laws that for decades had been used only against Arabs and not Jews, the government made it illegal to belong to Kach or Kahane Chai, the groups spawned by Kahane, or to any organisation with similar goals. Any group whose objectives include "the establishment of a theocracy in the biblical Land of Israel and the violent expulsion of Arabs from that land" was specifically labelled "terrorist."

Leaders of Kach and Kahane Chai describe themselves as ideological heirs of the militant rabbi, Meir Kahane, who was assassinated in New York in 1990.

Kahane, who founded the Jewish Defence League in New York, established Kach, which means "thus" or "this is the way," after he immigrated to Israel in 1971.

Advocating the expulsion of Arabs from Israel and its occupied territories, and railing against what he called "gentile, Hellenised foreign culture," Kahane made his first foray into Israeli politics in 1977, when he ran unsuccessfully for Parliament.

American gunship crashes off Kenya

MOGADISHU (AP) — An American AC-130 aerial gunship crashed into the Indian Ocean about 200 metres off the Kenyan coast Monday, killing one crewman and leaving 10 missing, U.S. officials said.

Three crew members survived the crash, said Colonel Steve Rausch, and a search and rescue operation was underway for the 10 missing personnel of the plane assigned to support the United Nations Operation in Somalia.

The AC-130 is a heavily armed version of the four-engine C-130 cargo plane, one of the workhorses of the U.S. military. It carries radar-guided canon and 50-calibre machine guns that can be fired with extreme accuracy.

The United States has had at least one AC-130 flying over Mogadishu almost nightly since June, when the United Nations began a mandate for Gen. Mohammed Farah Aidede.

Gen. Aidede, a warlord who controls the southern half of Mogadishu, was accused of

masterminding the ambush killings of 24 Pakistani U.N. peacekeepers on June 5.

Shortly after that attack by Somali militiamen, AC-130s and U.S. Cobra helicopter gunships were used to destroy Gen. Aidede's weapons storage areas and his home and headquarters in Mogadishu.

The United Nations ordered Gen. Aidede's arrest as a war criminal and began a search for him that ended after Oct. 3-4, when 18 American soldiers were killed in a bungled attempt to apprehend some of his closest aides.

Four AC-130s have been operating since June from Kenya's port city of Mombasa. Kenya borders Somalia to the south and has long served as a base for both U.S. military and humanitarian efforts aimed at Somalia.

Col. Rausch said the AC-130 crashed into the sea off the resort town of Malindi, about 120 kilometres north of Mombasa, shortly after it left its base on a routine night mission over Somalia's capital.

Col. Rausch said a military

board of inquiry had been formed to investigate the crash, but that it appeared to be the result of a malfunction and not of any damage sustained over Somalia.

At the same time, Col. Rausch said two 60-millimetre mortar shells exploded Monday evening near Mogadishu's seaport, where 320 American soldiers were awaiting shipment to Mombasa aboard a navy transport ship.

One of the shells fell near the port's main gate, the other just outside, Col. Rausch said, but neither caused any injuries. Two presumed mortar shells fell harmlessly into the sea just off Mogadishu's beaches Saturday night while Gen. John Shalikashvili, the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, was visiting Somalia.

Gen. Shalikashvili came to Mogadishu to visit remaining American troops and review plans for their withdrawal, which President Clinton ordered after October's bloody battle.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-10

PROGRAMME TWO

17:30 N.B.A. sport
18:00 News in French
19:00 Le Journal De L'Histoire
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 Too Close for Comfort
21:30
22:00 Environments: Pollution/Waste Water
22:30 News in English
23:00 Documentary

PRAYER TIMES

04:28 Fair
05:45 (Sunrise) Doha
11:45 Dhuhur
15:08 'Asr
17:45 Maghrib
19:02 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swedish, Tel. 810740
Assembly of God Church, Tel. 623755
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637400
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Teresian Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 625541

Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 625433
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Assiout International Church Tel. 625236
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684195
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Tel. 649532
The Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bullens supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Temperatures will steadily rise with clouds appearing at different altitudes and winds becoming northerly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 4/15
Aqaba 10/24
Doeira 4/18
Jordan Valley 12/23
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

max 12. Aqaba 24. Humidity readings: Amman 58 per cent. Aqaba 33 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Ramzi Mawzi 794788
Dr. Khalil Jhali 740740
Dr. Mohammad Omar 612232
Dr. Mohammad Shagair 622693
Firas pharmacy 661912
Fardous pharmacy 778336
Al Asma pharmacy 623672
Nairook pharmacy 636790
Al Salem pharmacy 644945
Shinacal pharmacy 637660
Nairook pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ali Al Shuqani 246140
Al Quds pharmacy (-)
ZARQA:
Dr. Akram Haddad 985550
Khalid pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue 630241
Jabal Amman Maternity 642262
Malas, J. Amman 63140
Palestine, Shuqani 664174
Shuqani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 645845
Al-Musabir Hospital 667270
The Islamic, Abdali 66612737
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 7710125
Al-Basir, J. Asfarich 7711125
Army Al-Maria 89161125
Queen Alia Hospital 60224050
Amal Hospital 674155

AMMAN:
Hussien Medical Centre 81381332
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 64428162
Akilic Maternity, J. Amn 64244162
Jabal Amman Maternity 642262
Malas, J. Amman 63140
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HOSPITALS

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FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:30 Aqaba (RJ)
09:30 Rome (RJ)
10:15 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
10:20 Berlin, London (RJ)
11:00 Tunis (add) (RJ)
11:00 Istanbul (RJ)
11:10 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:30 Colombo (RJ)
11:30 Riyadh (RJ)
11:30 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
12:30 London (RJ)
12:30 Istanbul (RJ)
12:30 Addis (RJ)
12:30 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
12:30 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
12:30 Toronto, Montreal (RJ)
12:30 Rome (RJ)
12:30 Aqaba (RJ)
12:30 Tunis (RJ)
12:30 Aqaba (RJ)
12:30 Rome (RJ)

06:30 Aqaba (RJ)
09:30 Rome (RJ)
10:15 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
10:20 Berlin, London (RJ)
11:00 Tunis (add) (RJ)
11:00 Istanbul (RJ)
11:10 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:30 Colombo (RJ)
11:30 Riyadh (RJ)
11:30 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
12:30 London (RJ)
12:30 Istanbul (RJ)
12:30 Addis (RJ)
12:30 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
12:30 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
12:30 Toronto, Montreal (RJ)
12:30 Rome (RJ)
12:30 Aqaba (RJ)
12:30 Tunis (RJ)
12:30 Aqaba (RJ)
12:30 Rome (RJ)

HUAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple 550/650
Banana 620
Banana (Mukammal) 620
Cabbage 70/40
Cauliflower 170/120
Clementine 220/150
Cucumbers (large) 250/200
Cucumbers (small) 360/250
Eggplant 280/120
Grape 1100/900
Green beans 220/150
Lemon 180/100
Marrow (large) 150/100
Marrow (small) 200/150
Olives (green) 320/220
Orange 700/500
Onion (dry) 350/300
Onion (green) 260/



HEARTFELT HUGS FOR A HAPPY 'EID: On the occasion of 'Eid Al Fitr, His Majesty King Hussein and Her Majesty Queen



Noor visit the SOS Children's Village where they distributed gifts to the children there. But it at Tareq district near Amman in 1986, the SOS

village provides home-like care to orphaned children and vocational training and education in nearby districts (Photos by George Crystal)

Eid celebration ends

AMMAN (J.T.) — Government institutions and public organisations today return to business following a five-day break in celebration of 'Eid Al Fitr, marking the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

On Sunday, the day of the feast, worshippers attended prayers at the Kingdom's mosques. Prayers at Al Hashemiyah Mosque were attended by His Majesty King Hussein, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, other Royal family members, ministers, several other Jordanian officials along with a large congregation.

After the prayers, King Hussein and Prince Hassan

visited the tombs of King Abdullah, founder of the Kingdom, and King Talal, where they recited verses of the Koran. The King also visited the tomb of the late Queen Alia.

At a ceremony held later at Raghadan Palace, King Hussein received well-wishers including Cabinet members, speakers and members of Parliament, the chief justice, directors of security services, representatives of religious denominations, heads of tribes, directors of departments, ambassadors, presidents of universities and other dignitaries.

Amman observes Arab City Day

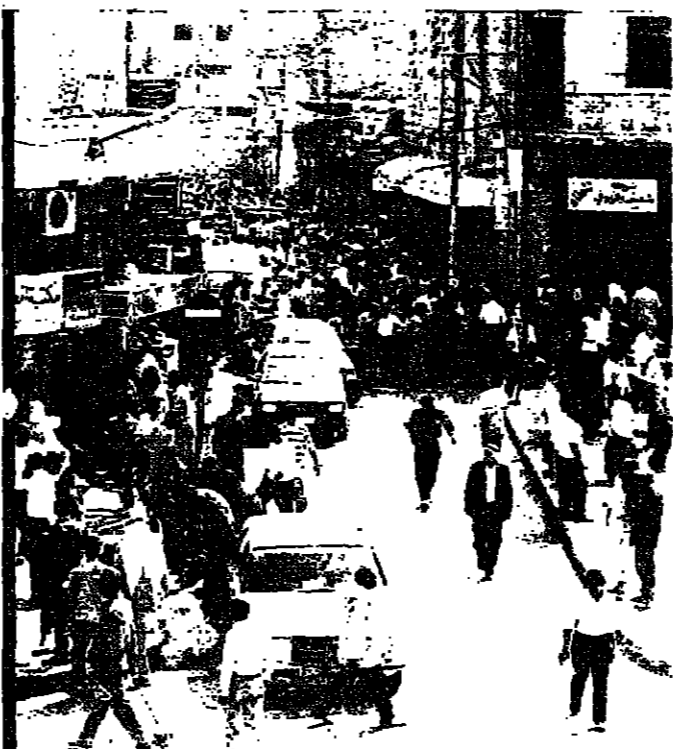
AMMAN (Petra) — The Greater Amman Municipality Tuesday observed Arab City Day as declared by the Arab Cities Organisation by executing an intensive clean-up programme in various districts of the capital, according to Amman Mayor Mamdouh Al Abbadi.

Dr. Abbadi said the municipality's 1994 fiscal budget is JD 70.263 million of which 66.5 per cent is allocated for services, and the balance is to be used for construction and appropriation of land in the implementation of its projects.

He said the municipality has started an intensive cleanliness campaign covering various areas of the capital, with posters at roadsides calling on citizens to exercise their duty in safeguarding the environment in and around the city.

Dr. Abbadi said that this year Arab City Day is being observed under the slogan: "The City of the Future Will Cater to Integrated Services for its Inhabitants."

He added that the municipality is proud of its achievements so far in Amman, which, he said serves as a model of a



A crowded street in the heart of Amman's commercial centre (File photo)

small but modern and clean city despite the difficult circumstances it has faced in the past five decades.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Syrian envoy dies in Amman

AMMAN (Petra) — The charge d'affaires at the Syrian Embassy in Amman, Ahmad Dabbas, died of a heart attack Tuesday morning. His body will be laid to rest in his home-town of Aleppo.

RSS to study phospho-gypsum purification

AMMAN (J.T.) — A cooperation agreement was signed recently between the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) and the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC), according to news reports in the local press. Under the terms of the agreement the RSS will conduct studies on the prospect of purifying phospho-gypsum produced from phosphoric acid industries at the industrial complex in Aqaba, the reports said. Phospho-gypsum is used as construction material and conforms to Jordanian standards and specifications. The study, expected to take one year, requires that the RSS develop a simplified method of purifying the phospho-gypsum in laboratories by using minimum quantities of water in order to establish a pioneering plant to produce pure gypsum. The effort should pave the way for launching new construction industries in the Kingdom. According to the press reports, the agreement also provides for the formation of a joint RSS-JPMC team to follow up the implementation of the proposal and to prepare periodic reports on the development of the work process. The agreement was signed on behalf of the JPMC by its director general, Sami Al Madani, and on behalf of the RSS by its vice-president, Sa'id Aloush.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Book exhibition at the Safeway International.
- ★ "Permanent" exhibition of 54 Arab contemporary artists at Darat Al Fann of the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation in Jabal Lweilweh (Tel. 643251/2).
- ★ Art exhibition by several Iraqi and Jordanian artists at Orfali Art Gallery (Tel. 826932).

LECTURE

- ★ Lecture entitled "The Physiology of Woman's Harmonic Changes Throughout Her Life And Means Of Dealing With Them" by Dr. Sa'id Hijazi at the Royal Cultural Centre at 4:30 p.m.

POETRY AND MUSICAL RECITAL

- ★ Poetry recital by poet Ibrahim Nasrallah accompanied by musical performance by artists Imad and Nasser Abido at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

Palestinian security more important than resumed talks — PLO

(Continued from page 1)

Hebron," he said. "We don't rule out the need to take steps."

He declined to elaborate but said international action demanded by the PLO would not solve the problem.

"Had there been a multinational force in Hebron, there's a doubt whether it could have prevented the tragedy," Mr. Peres said.

"We've seen the decisions of the (U.N.) Security Council don't change a situation — not in Bosnia, not in Angola, not in Somalia and not here."

Mr. Peres said that persistent delays in negotiations with the PLO were distancing chances of meeting a mid-April deadline for starting Palestinian autonomy.

Mr. Peres said chances of meeting the timetable were "dwindling" as negotiations continued to be delayed.

"I would regret very much if the Palestinians continue to delay the start of negotiations," Mr. Peres said. "But how does the saying go? How can I say how long it takes to walk to town if I don't know when you are leaving and at what pace you are walking."

Mr. Ross said before leaving Tunis only that Monday's talks "touched on a number of issues including Palestinian concerns about the security of the Palestinians in the (occupied) territories."

The PLO news agency, Wafa, said Mr. Arafat renewed his demand for "international protection for the Palestinian people against massacres committed by the Israeli army and armed settlers" before the talks could resume.

Arafat adviser Ahmad Tibi, an Israeli Arab, accused Mr. Ross of showing bias in Tunis. "We expected Dennis Ross would come up with the proposals of an honest broker and not adopt almost all that one side is proposing," Mr. Tibi said.

Israel has rejected posting armed foreign forces in the occupied territories and says that settlements' future would only be negotiated within three years of implementing autonomy.

Israel Radio said foreign ministry director-general Uri Savir proposed to the Palestinians that they could put any issue they want on the agenda, including settlements, once the talks resumed.

Mr. Tibi suggested that the Palestinians needed something more substantial in hand before they could resume talks. He repeated the Palestinian position that the settlements causing the most friction, especially the 450 Jews living among Hebron's 110,000 Arabs, be dismantled immediately.

Mr. Abed-Rabbo said the Palestinians demanded that the United States and Russia, as co-sponsors of the Middle East peace conference, guarantee protection measures adopted at the United Nations.

"We consider that a U.N. Security Council resolution, if adopted, has no practical value if it is not linked to a U.S. and Russian commitment to guarantee, directly, the international protection in the occupied territories," he said.

The council on Monday cancelled consultations that were expected to be followed by a vote condemning the Hebron massacre and calling for an international presence in occupied territories to protect Palestinians.

PLO officials say the cancellation was demanded by the United States.

"The results of (the Arafat-Ross meeting) do not invite optimism. There is an American attempt to use the U.S. Security Council resolution as a card to bargain in order to resume negotiations," Mr. Abed-Rabbo said.

Tunis-based diplomats said Norway's Terje Roed Larsen, who helped broker last

September's peace accord, had intensified mediation efforts with the PLO and the U.S. envoy over the past two days based on a five-point compromise.

But they said the compromise was not accepted because of differences between Mr. Arafat and Mr. Ross on guarantees for implementing a Security Council resolution.

Palestinian and diplomatic sources said Mr. Arafat had demanded a U.S. commitment that the U.N. resolution be implemented, and Mr. Ross's response was not clear enough to satisfy the Palestinian leader.

For his part Mr. Ross demanded from Mr. Arafat a clear commitment to resume talks with Israel on Wednesday, just after the United States voted for the U.N. resolution.

Mr. Arafat told Mr. Ross that while the U.N. resolution was important, still more crucial were the international presence in occupied territories, the dismantling of Jewish settlements in Hebron, and limiting the carrying of arms by settlers, Mr. Arafat's adviser Marwan Kanafani said.

Arabs expressed dismay Tuesday after the Security Council again postponed debate on the draft resolution that would condemn the Hebron massacre.

Syria's Tishin daily said the delay was a "big disappointment" because the world was expecting the international community to take "practical measures" to protect Palestinians.

"It has become certain that the powers that dominate the Security Council are still exercising a double standard when it comes to Israel," the newspaper wrote.

No immediate explanation has been given for delaying Monday's session. In the past, the United States repeatedly has sought delays as it strives for wording it would find

Levinger taken to court in gesture

(Continued from page 1)

By indicting Mr. Levinger on a minor charge dating back to 1992, the government signalled its determination to crack down on Jewish extremists after the Feb. 25 mosque massacre.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation has hinged its return to negotiations on implementing the peace accord with Israel on curbing the settlers. It says that the measures taken so far are too little, too late and Palestinians need international protection.

Mr. Levinger, 59, is a founder of the Jewish enclave of 450 in Hebron. The charge sheet said that in June 1992, Mr. Levinger ignored army orders to leave an area of Hebron that had been declared a closed military area. Judge Zvi Zilbertal set an April 12 trial date.

"Our feeling is that a campaign of persecution has begun against anyone identified as an opponent of the peace process," Mr. Levinger's attorney, Naftali Wertzberger, told the Associated Press.

Mr. Levinger acknowledged that sometimes he violated the law in confrontations with soldiers or Palestinians.

"In every democratic state, people demonstrate... perhaps, some of my demonstrations were also a little bit against the law," said Mr. Levinger, sporting a long gray beard and black skullcap.

Mr. Levinger argued that Israeli troops in Hebron are not enough protection and that the peace agreement also undermined their safety by signalling that settlements may be dismantled.

Some cabinet ministers have called for dismantling the Hebron settlement since the massacre.

The Crown Prince is accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Talal Hassan.

In a statement following his meeting Monday with President Tudjman, the Crown Prince expressed happiness over the progress in the peace talks held in Vienna over the future of the former Yugoslavia describing it as a first step that might open a new chapter of cooperation between the Croats and Muslims of Bosnia.

Containment of acts of violence is imperative in accordance with the U.N. Charter, the Crown Prince said.

Construction works drop by 40% in '93 — report

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Construction activity in Jordan declined by nearly 40 per cent during 1993 after hitting record highs in 1991 and 1992, according to recently released official figures.

The government issued 16,469 permits for 4,205 million square metres of building during 1993, compared with 21,191 permits for 6,45 million square metres in 1992 and 17,249 permits for 4,37 million square metres during 1991.

The figures were given in the December 1993 bulletin of the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) and taken from the Jordan Engineers Association (JEA).

In 1989, the total number of permits was 9,581 for 2.45 million square metres. The huge jump in the figures was a reflection of the increased demand for housing in the country following the return of more than 300,000 expatriates and families in the wake of the Gulf crisis triggered by the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

The drop in construction activity in 1993, as reflected in the number of permits issued during the year, was seen as a sign that demand for housing by the returnees had tapered off.

A government study conducted in 1991 estimated that Jordan needed 55,000 new housing units to meet the demands of the returnees added with the normal growth in demand.

No detail was available to establish what part of these estimated needs had been met.

The boom in construction

— which is linked to increased activity in building materials production and in other related sectors of the economy — was seen to have a major factor in the 11 per cent growth that Jordan's gross domestic product (GDP) witnessed in 1991.

The subsequent decline in the sector was reflected in the GDP growth, which was registered at around six per cent in 1992. The same growth is estimated for 1993 as well as 1994.

The 1993 figures for the construction sector showed that:

— 14,285 permits were issued accounting for 3.07 million square metres for solely residential purposes, while 2,184 permits were issued for 1.13 million square metres of multipurpose construction.

— Of the total, Amman accounted for 6,890 permits for 2.05 million square metres of area for residential purposes and 1,282 permits for 864,800 square metres for multipurpose construction.

The comparative 1992 figures were 12,180 permits, 5.12 million square metres and 7 permits and 36,500 square metres respectively.

Real estate agents and engineers said a good part of the permits issued for Amman went for expansion of already built buildings.

A law passed in late 1992 authorised the construction of a fourth floor for already existing buildings subject to a set of parameters related to the age of the building and strength.

The decision was taken partly in view of an increasing number of applicants for new housing, particularly in the Amman area, where land

available for construction is

growing scarce. Another factor that prompted the government to low such construction was so considerations that extended families were growing and a majority of such families did not have enough resources to buy new land for construction.

"It helps a father who owns a two or three-storey building to build an extra floor for his married sons to stay rather than letting them enter the already inflated market for rented houses," commented an official in support of the move.

Irbid ranked second to Amman, accounting for 4,245 permits for 486,600 square metres of residential area and 443 permits covering 98,100 square metres of multipurpose area. (Comparable 1992 figures: 4,278 permits for 717,900 square metres and three permits and 500 square metres respectively.)

In Zarqa, the authorities issued 865 permits for 205,000 square metres of residential area and 261 permits for 59,600 square metres of multipurpose construction (Comparable 1992 figures: 1,356 permits for 264,900 square metres for residential purposes. No permits were issued for multipurpose construction).

The rest of the country accounted for 2,285 permits for 339,100 square metres of residential area and 198 permits for 71,500 square metres of multipurpose construction. (Comparable 1992 figures: 2,366 permits for 355,400 square metres and one permit for 500 square metres respectively.)

Amman-Dead Sea highway becomes fully operational

AMMAN (AP) — A major four-lane highway between Amman and the Dead Sea has become fully operational ahead of a linkage with an abandoned bridge across the Jordan River to areas expected to come under Palestinian autonomy, officials said Tuesday.

They said the remaining five-kilometre stretch of the highway, nicknamed "Peace Road" by diplomats, was opened this week after repairs. The stretch was closed down more than a year ago because of dangerous mudslides.

The repair involved shoring up the steep hillside with reinforced concrete.

The 50-kilometre highway was built at a cost of \$37 million, partly funded by the U.S. government. It branches off from the main southern Amman-Aqaba Highway and runs down to the Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth.

A branch road leads to the King Hussein Bridge, which serves as the only passenger

crossing between the west and east banks of the Jordan River.

Further south, down towards the Dead Sea lies the Prince Abdullah Bridge, which was closed during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, when Israel seized the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Work is under way on removing mines along a three-kilometre branch road that links the highway with the bridge, located near the spot where tradition says Jesus Christ was baptised.

The bridge, the southernmost crossing before the Jordan River pours into the Dead Sea, will be opened as soon as Israel begins its military withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho under its Sept. 13 accord with the PLO, officials say.

The bridge was a key link in an Amman-Jericho road prior to its closure in 1967.

Israel has already made improvements on the western side of the river and linked the

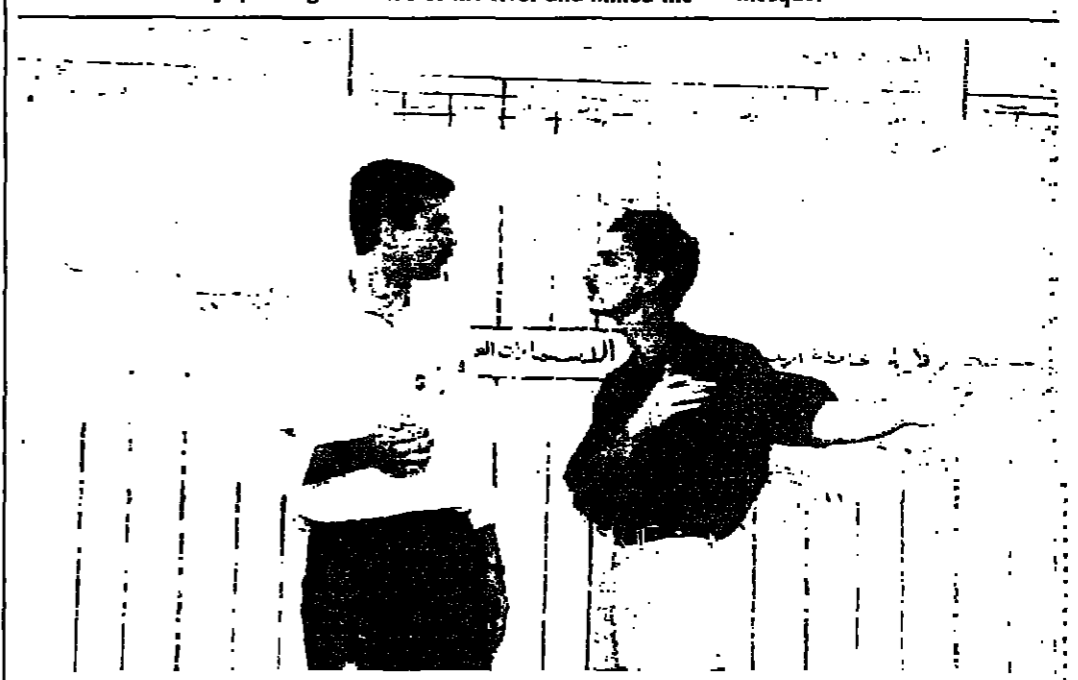
bridge with the main Jericho-Bethlehem highway.

According to Western diplomats, the Amman-Jericho Road will do away with the need for Palestinians to pass through any other part of the West Bank and serves the Israeli purpose of separating the autonomous area from other territories.

Under the September agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Israel will grant autonomy to the Gaza Strip and Jericho in the first phase and allow the arrangement to take hold in all other parts of the West Bank.

Israel was expected to begin the first phase on Dec. 13, but disputes with the PLO over some of the provisions of the accord held up the move.

Further negotiations produced compromises, but the PLO suspended all talks following the Feb. 25 massacre of Muslim worshippers at a Jewish settler at a West Bank mosque.



Amman Financial Market officials on the trading floor (File photo)

3-day meeting to develop strategies to stimulate Arab financial markets

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Arab League Department of Economic Affairs will organise a three-day conference in Amman next month on the role of Arab financial markets in development; the meeting will be held under the patronage of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan.

The April 9 through 11 meeting will cover several topics aimed at further enhancing cooperation among Arab financial markets, overcoming

obstacles and difficulties in their functions and the financial markets' contributions to Arab socio-economic development, according to a preparatory bulletin on the coming conference.

The bulletin said the meeting, which is to take place at the Forte Grand Hotel in Amman under the theme: "Strategies to Stimulate the Work of Arab Financial Markets," has been organised in cooperation with the Arab

Banks Federation, the Federation of Arab Financial Markets and the Amman Financial Market.

According to the bulletin the conference, in which Arab as well as foreign economists will take part, is an attempt not only to discuss working papers, but also to come up with practical recommendations and resolutions to help achieve integration among Arab financial markets.

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Russians to fill the gap

MOSCOW'S RECENT proposal to convene another Madrid conference on the Arab-Israeli conflict may be intended more at reasserting Russia's role in international politics than presenting a practical solution to the logjam in peace negotiations. There had to be a point at which Moscow decided to shed its low international profile, which came as a result of the dissolution of the former Soviet Union and the lost economic, political and military prestige that ensued. That point was first reached during NATO's ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs, and now it seems to be the turn of the Middle East.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin has been under increasing local pressure not to continue to play second fiddle to the U.S. on regional hot spots, especially in the Balkans and the Middle East. Encouraged by its success in persuading the Serbs to withdraw their heavy weapons from the Bosnian capital more than three weeks ago, the Russian leadership must have found in the stalled Arab-Israeli peace talks another opportunity to make a reappearance as a global power.

The Israeli-American flat rejection of the Russian proposal to convene another Madrid conference makes the idea a non starter for all intents and purposes. Only the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has publicly endorsed the idea and even then the Palestinian welcome was not exactly very warm. This means that the parties to the peace negotiations are back to where they had left off two weeks ago, with the continuation of the suspended bilateral talks being the only viable alternative left for them to pursue.

But the new start-up requires from Washington to act more even-handedly than it did in the aftermath of the Al Ibrahimi mosque massacre on Feb. 22. The fact that the U.N. Security Council has been unable to adopt an effective resolution on that pogrom, nearly three weeks after it happened, mainly due to the U.S. position, has provided a fertile climate for the Russians to move in.

The spectre of a renewed big power rivalry does not bode well for the prospects of peace in this region. During the four decades of the cold war, Arab and Jewish maximalists could always depend on the continued support of their mentors in Washington and Moscow in their rejection of peace. Indeed, the Arab rejectionists, a few by the standards of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, are reminding their fellow peace activists that the fall of the Soviet Union and the supremacy of the U.S. are strengthening the position of Israel and weakening that of the Arabs. There is of course much truth in this, considering the U.S.' traditional partiality in favour of Israel.

This is not to say that constructive Russian efforts, and new ideas, are not welcome to move the peace process forward. But unless the U.S., the main co-sponsor of the Middle East peace talks, turns itself into the honest broker it claims to be, the process might witness bigger setbacks from now on.

That is why the U.S. should act to facilitate passage of the Security Council resolution on the Hebron massacre right away. Otherwise, Washington would only help the cause of rejectionists on both sides: Arabs and Jews.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THERE IS a conflict between Moscow's call for holding a new Madrid conference in order to re-examine the Middle East peace process and Washington's desire to see the Palestinians and the Israelis resuming their talks as soon as possible, said Mahmoud Rimawi, a columnist in Al Ra'i daily. The Arabs, who suspended their talks with Israel in the light of its procrastinations and obstinence, fear that Moscow would retreat and withdraw its proposal under U.S.-Israeli pressure, said the writer. Dismayed at the non-achievement of a settlement in the past two years of negotiations, Moscow has suggested that the whole process be re-examined and fresh efforts be made to reach a settlement, said the writer. But he said that neither the Israelis nor the Americans wish to see a second Madrid parley for the simple reason that Israel benefits from the current state of affairs, and also because a Madrid conference means once again referring the Middle East conflict to the international community rather than keeping it under the mercy of the United States.

A COLUMNIST in Al Dastour drew a contrast between Israel and South Africa, saying that in both states racial discrimination is being practiced by the ruling regime. Taher Adwan said that while the whites in South Africa oppress the blacks, the Israelis are practicing genocide against Palestinians. It is regrettable that under the so-called new world order, the world community is condoning the Zionist barbaric acts against defenceless Palestinians, he said. Referring to the investigation being held in Israel in the aftermath of the massacre at the Hebron Mosque, the writer said one of the officers admitted that his troops had no permission to open fire on Jewish settlers even if they were caught committing murder. The world community has lost all credibility, he said.

The mind-set behind the massacre

By G.H. Jansen

"WAR BEGINS in the mind of man" the Charter of UNESCO begins rather grandly, as indeed does everything involving man, including the idea of God. That truism cannot but lead to speculation as to what could possibly be going on in the mind of one Baruch Goldstein as, on Friday Feb. 25 he gunned down in the back worshippers praying in the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron.

His mind-set has a horrible fascination as does that of many other Israelis, including adolescents who say, publicly, that Goldstein was "a great man", a "hero", who "should have killed more Arabs" and who now make pilgrimage to his grave, where they kiss his tombstone.

The mind-set that motivated this mass-murderer is, of course, what is known as "Zionism": the claim that a tract of land along the western coast of West Asia, better known as "Palestine", belongs to the "Jewish people"

because it was "promised" to them by their tribal god Yahweh thousands of years ago.

Strangely enough, the Jews do not seem to realise that this particular myth of their deities and degrades the "Lord of the Worlds", the creator of an immense cosmos, to the position of a real estate agent, parcelling out the surface of the earth and giving bits of it to this person and to that.

This very strange belief has been recently objectified by a newly-formed political movement in Israel named "This Land is Ours", the "Ours" being the Israeli Jews. The improbability of the claim is made still more improbable when those four words are pronounced with a strong American accent by a settler, an immigrant from the United States, whose remotest ancestors could not have had any connection with the "Land" for the last few thousand years if ever. And yet belief in the validity, the sanctity even, of that very strange claim is strong

enough to make intelligent and educated people like Goldstein ready to kill and be killed. Because it is part of their religion — of Judaism. To be a believing Jew is to be a Zionist. Needless to say this does not necessarily mean that all Jews are Zionists. There are many believing Jews who are non-Zionist and others who are even anti-Zionist, such as those who may be found in "Reform Judaism" or "Conservative Judaism" or in the "Naturei Karta" movement. But certainly most Jews have an in-built tilt towards Zionism. And certainly Zionism is impossible without an acceptance of the prophecy that the dispersed "Chosen People" will return to the "Promised Land", as stated in the history of the Jewish tribes recounted in the books of what the Christians call "The Old Testament".

Such unrealistic views as those of "This Land is Ours" can survive only if they do not come into contact with very different realities in the outside world. And that

means that the persons holding these ideas live in self-enclosed isolation which would be the case, for example, in Jewish ghettos, or in cities on the sub-Continent in communal mohallas or quarters. The Jews, as a people who are in a minority everywhere, except in Israel, are particularly apt to cluster together by choice or for safety, as for instance in Brooklyn which is where Baruch Goldstein came from. When he moved from the mohalla of Brooklyn he went to Israel, which is one great big Jewish ghetto and then chose to live in a sub-ghetto which was the settlement of Kiryat Arba, where certain Jews got together because they shared the same ideas and beliefs — ideas which therefore never came under any testing challenge and could therefore be given universal validity. This is the exact opposite of the open, pluralistic society which has to be open because it is pluralistic, with an interplay of beliefs and ideas.

The "progression" of Jew-

ish messianic ideas may be seen as follows with the ideas and conditions producing and feeding into the succeeding stages: Judaism — Zionism — the Jewish State of Israel — exclusive Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox neighbourhoods in Israeli towns — the mohalla mentality — settlements peopled by Jews belonging to a particular politico-religious movement, like the Kach movement in Kiryat Arba — Goldstein and his admirers — the Hebron Mosque massacre.

Therefore those who deny that the mosque massacre was the work of a single man are correct when they say, instead, that it was the product of a certain milieu, a certain milieu. But a context that was deliberately chosen by the individual concerned because he wanted to immerse himself in one particular, and most peculiar, weltanschauung, in which the "welt" is simply an extension of Jewish wishes and desires. Hence, the firm belief in the correctness of one's god-given beliefs can lead to a

situation in which, on the day of the Hebron massacre, an order by the government of the Jewish state for the settlers of Kiryat Arba not to enter Hebron and to stay within the settlement was completely ignored by the settlers strutting around Hebron, bearing arms.

For had not one of their number, in defence of Jewish possession of the "Promised Land", "heroically" even broken God's commandment: "Thou Shalt Not Kill"? By what right, people like the settlers ask, does an earthly state, even a Jewish one, give orders to carry out the "Divine Purpose" that "The Chosen People" should live in the "Promised Land"? Israel will have a very hard struggle before it, if and when, decides to make the settlers — hitherto outrageously indulged — behave like all the other citizens in a modern state.

The writer is a Cyprus-based journalist specialising in Islamic and Middle Eastern affairs.

By Deborah Seward
The Associated Press

M. KAHIL

MOSCOW — Bruised by several years of humiliation, Russia has ended a string of foreign policy defeats and is challenging the West with an assertive new diplomacy and a readiness to fight for great power status.

Diplomatic successes in the Bosnian war, Russia's desire to reclaim a role in Mideast peacemaking and a tough response to the spy scandal in the United States have given Russia a new voice and weight in world affairs.

"They are getting their act together. There's been a great deal of difference among various foreign policy institutions in the last two years and they are starting to coalesce," said Margot Light, an expert on Russian foreign policy at the London School of Economics.

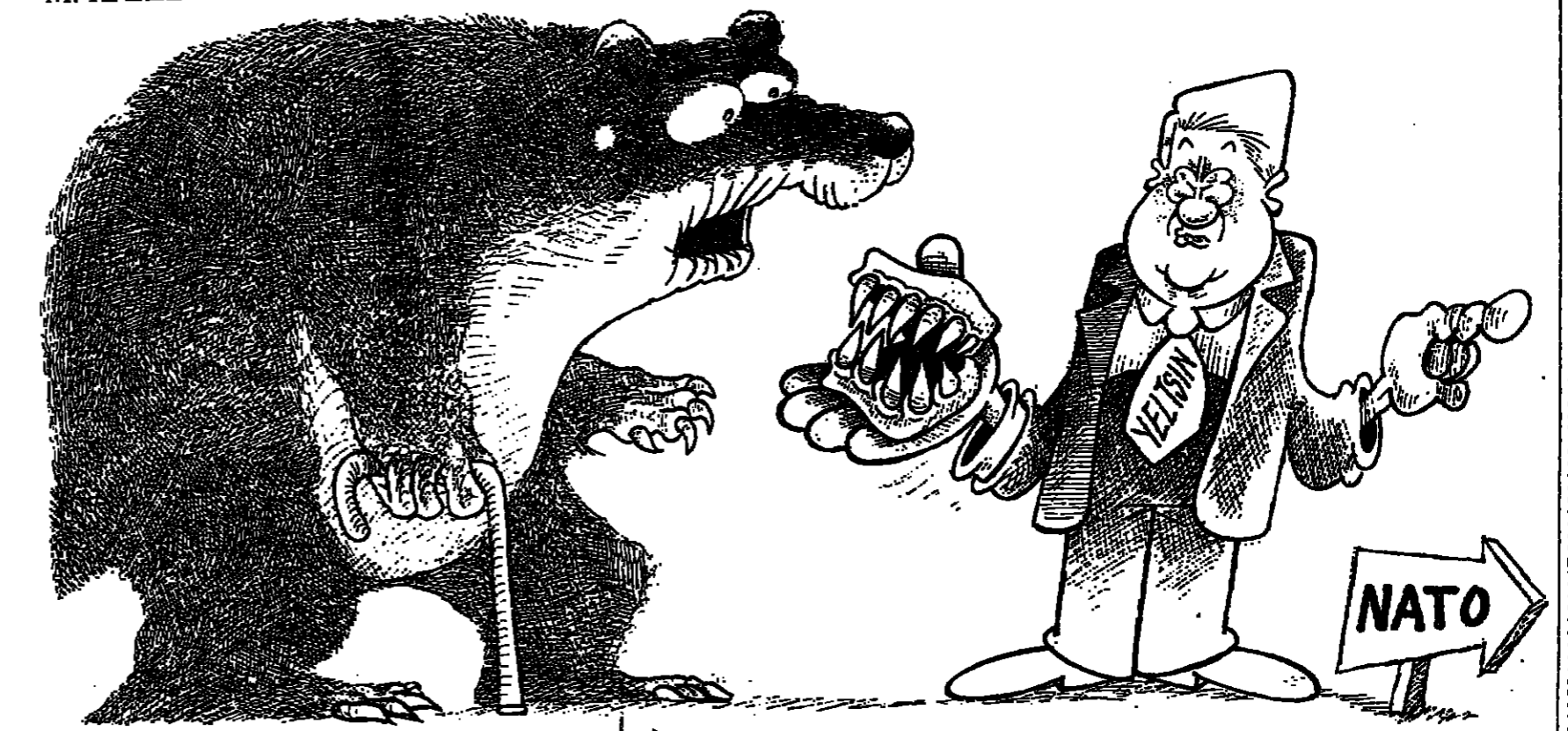
When Russia inherited the Soviet diplomatic mantle in 1991, the Kremlin's superpower legacy was in shambles after the loss of Eastern Europe and the end of cold war competition in Africa, the Middle East and Central America.

All that was left were the nuclear weapons, an impoverished army and a battered economy. To the dismay of the proud men in the Kremlin, western aid dominated nearly every key summit Boris Yeltsin has attended.

In a 1992 analysis, Russia's influential Council for Foreign and Defence Policy concluded: "Russia is facing the urgent problem of loss of political prestige, trust and dignity as a state."

Russia retreated into isolation as NATO extended its influence into Eastern Europe and the Baltics and threatened to use force in the Balkans, which Russia considers its historical sphere of influence.

Ultrarationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, a bossy party man, the most vocal in December parliamentary elections, accused Yeltsin of selling Russia's interests out of the West and said any attack on Serbs should be considered an attack



No longer a loser

Russia asserts its role as world leader

on Russia itself. Polls showed many Russians agreed with him.

Mr. Yeltsin and the Foreign Ministry, considered one of the most liberal wings of the government, seemed powerless to set Russia's diplomatic agenda. Their action consisted primarily of reacting to the West.

Russia began to reconsider its policy late last year, with the military exercising greater power, reformers in retreat and nationalists on the offensive.

The turnaround finally came several weeks ago, when Russia, angered by NATO's

failure to consult with it before threatening to bomb the Bosnian Serbs and worried about its isolation, stepped in to help mediate the conflict.

Russia persuaded the Serbs, its traditional allies, to remove their heavy artillery from around Sarajevo in exchange for sending Russian peacekeepers to the region.

The Russian initiative won international praise, and the sight of Russian peacekeepers being cheered as they entered Sarajevo raised the nation's spirits. It also helped silence Mr. Yeltsin's nationalist enemies.

After the Euphoria of its diplomatic triumph, Russia was stunned by the uproar caused by the arrest of CIA official Aldrich Ames and his wife, Rosario, accused of spying for the Soviet Union and Russia.

"Russia's role in the Bosnian crisis was truly important. Our country's authority was strengthened and somebody in the United States really didn't like that," said Vladimir Lukin, the former Russian ambassador to Washington.

"It was necessary to urgently show the world the insidiousness of the Russians and here

they remembered about Ames," Lukin, now chairman of the Duma's Foreign Affairs Committee, told a recent issue of Literaturnaya Gazeta.

Russian politicians and even former spies have expressed hope the spy scandal will not derail the budding U.S.-Russian partnership, but have also chastised Washington for its use of cold war diplomatic tools.

"And what now? Intelligence services have existed since Adam and Eve," former spy Mikhail Lyubimov said in the weekly Moscow news. "One really wouldn't want the historic rapprochement be-

tween Russia and the West to slow down because of spying, which everybody is fed up with."

Russia has shown no sign it is about to let Washington push it around, recently expelling one senior U.S. diplomat and fingering another for trying to gather information about a top-secret tank.

But the Kremlin has demonstrated its desire to keep its diplomatic momentum rolling, announcing its intention to join NATO's partnership for peace programme and offering to help get the Mideast peace talks started again.

Learning to live with a less centralised China

By Gerald Segal

LONDON — China's central government is fading in importance. The crisis of governance has major implications for the way in which the outside world deals with China.

Market reforms that decentralise power have unglued important parts of the social fabric. At a time of uncertainty over the succession to Deng Xiaoping, the authority of government is seriously undermined.

Beijing no longer has control over the economy. Attempts to impose an austerity plan in mid-1993 were soon abandoned. Efforts later in the year to impose a new tax structure so that the central government would stop losing so much revenue to the regions is being frustrated at lower levels.

Provinces are acting, as the World Bank has noted, like increasingly independent agents. The percentage of trade done between provinces is falling as they expand contacts with the outside world. The official media worry openly about protectionism and trade wars between provinces. The loosening of central au-

thority has caused a sharp rise in the drug and gun trade and in associated rates of crime and drug addiction. China has a floating population of 1.30 million, and another 200 million people are surplus to the requirements of the rural economy. Mass migration on this scale would be the largest such flow in human history.

This is looming at a time when senior Chinese military leaders are warning that social decay is eating away at the morale and professionalism of the armed forces.

External trade is increasingly a matter that need not involve contact with the central government. Beijing cannot enforce existing international accords, for example on trade in textiles or the observance of copyright, because it does not control those parts of the economy where violations take place.

The weakness of the central government accounts for growing problems along the southwestern frontier where the trade in guns, drugs and even women sold into prostitution in Southeast Asia is out of control. The rise of lawlessness is

also evident in the increase in piracy off China's coast. Some of these naval entrepreneurs turn their boats into transports for the illegal migration of more than 100,000 Chinese a year. At least 20,000 of them end up in the United States, with double that number entering Europe. Beijing cannot control the flow.

The weakness of central government extends to relations with Hong Kong and Taiwan. One of the reasons why Britain is able to take such a tough line on Hong Kong is that Beijing has lost important aspects of control of Guangdong Province, adjacent to Hong Kong, which relies heavily on investment from the British colony and wants to get on with business.

Taiwan is finding that increasing economic convergence with southern China means that Beijing has less power over both Taiwan and southern China. A struggle that was once between China and Taiwan is now much more complex.

In short, China is changing shape. It is thus becoming all the more important to deal with the parts where real deci-

sions are made. On many issues, that means dealing with provinces and with lower levels of government.

Many foreign governments would welcome a more decentralised China because that would weaken Beijing's ability to pursue a nationalist agenda in its numerous territorial disputes with other Asian states, and on other issues. Yet on some issues, such as enforcing global agreements under GATT, outsiders have an interest in a centralised China.

There is much that stops, short of a formal breakup of China, would offer the outside world the opportunity of constructive dialogue with the largest country in the world. It may be that the way to ensure that China does not become more dangerous as it grows richer and stronger is to ensure that in practice, if not in law, there is more than one China to deal with.

The writer is a senior fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. The article is reprinted from the International Herald Tribune.

LETTERS

Hatred shouldn't prevail

To the Editor:

AS THE world heard the news of the horrible slaughter at the Al Ibrahimi Mosque, in Hebron, so did I. What a great excuse to stop the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. To allow one crazy, overzealous Jew to stop the progress of peace in the entire region seems counter-productive to me. Not to speak of allowing hate to conquer love, once again. It seems so easy to hate and separate. Peace and love, on the other hand, seem nearly impossible. Fear and hate cause closed-minded people, like Goldstein, to commit such cold-blooded acts.

Even though Goldstein called himself "religious" his hateful actions at the mosque proved he was not Godly. God is love. When we love, we do not kill. To get the Middle East peace talks going again, we must all learn a positive lesson from this mass murder and not allow it to give us excuses to wage more war.

If anything, this latest slaughter only proves how badly peace is needed in the Middle East. We actually fear one another! What a sad state we have slipped into as a world society.

Religion has caused so much of the world's violence and hate. God did not have this negative goal in mind when the different religions were started. The whole purpose of religion is to worship God. If we use God as an excuse for hate, then we have missed the whole message of religion.

We as a world community cannot allow the evil acts of one individual to control the entire peace process. That gives his fearful, hateful thoughts domination. No good ever comes from hate, fear, separation and war. What we must do is use this horrible event to change the situation for the greater good of all Middle Eastern people. When the Middle East is at peace, the entire globe will be closer to world peace. Peace comes one step at a time. We must have patience and tolerance and always remember, "we are all created by the same God."

Linda L. May,
Iowa,
the U.S.

هكذا منذ الاصل

Faith and 'the Balkan factor' prop up new dinar

By Bernd Debusmann
Reuters

BELGRADE — The clerk behind the counter of McDonald's restaurant in Belgrade's Terazije Square was indignant. "No, we don't take German marks," she said, waving away a proffered 10 mark note. "We have our own money."

At a nearby pharmacy, the foreign currency suffered similar rejection as it did at a news stand.

Only a few weeks ago, when the German mark still effectively functioned as Serbia's currency, 10 mark notes were in such high demand that enterprising Belgrade citizens made small fortunes by charging five per cent for breaking large denomination notes into smaller bills.

Employees would rush into the street to change the currency into marks as soon as they were paid. Inflation running at an annual rate of more than a billion per cent eroded the value of Yugoslav dinars by the minute.

Small notes were at a premium because no one wanted to change more than absolutely necessary for a purchase. Someone who wanted to buy, say, 10 marks' worth of groceries and had nothing but a 50 mark bill might find himself stuck with change in evaporating dinars.

A 500 billion dinar note issued in December and worth around eight marks at the time shrunk in value to 1/600th of a pfennig within three weeks.

All that changed, at least for the time being, on Jan. 24, when the government introduced a new dinar, at par value to the German mark, as part of an economic recovery package which also provided for cuts in public spending and more efficient tax collection.

The government said its plan was backed by reserves of 500 million German marks (285 million) and gold.

Many economic experts scoffed at the plan, arguing that the new currency was too thinly backed and would fail as quickly as a string of previous re-denominations.

Spread among the 11 million people of Serbia and Montenegro, the two former Yugoslav republics that make up rump Yugoslavia, hard currency reserves work out at around 26 per person.

The plan, some experts said, would be perceived as just another ploy to get citizens to part with their hard currency nest eggs, hidden under mattresses and in pillow cases as protection against inflation.

"I think the super-dinar works because people want to believe in it...Yes we used the German mark as an alternative currency for almost two years. But no one liked doing that. It's a matter of pride," a Belgrade housewife.

And how could there be a hard currency in an economy so badly devastated by international economic sanctions that two thirds of the work force is unemployed and industrial production has come to a virtual stop?

"I think the superdinar works because people want to believe in it," said a Belgrade housewife. "Yes, we used the German mark as an alternative currency for almost two years. But no one liked doing that. It's a matter of pride."

Businessman Miodrag Arsic phrased it differently: "Don't look for logic, remember where we are. This is the Balkan factor."

Since the government slowed down the printing presses which had run round-the-clock to churn out banknotes with more and more zeros, inflation has dropped

from 313,000,000 per cent in January to minus 0.6 per cent in February, according to the Federal Bureau of Statistics.

The government now pursues a policy of money supply so tight that banks frequently have to turn back clients trying to change hard currency into new dinars.

The anti-inflation programme was drawn up by 75-year-old Dragoslav Avramovic, who worked for the World Bank in Washington for 25 years and was called out of retirement to try to cure the rump Yugoslavia's financial misery.

Mr. Avramovic was appointed governor of the Central Bank on March 2.

In his first interview since his appointment, he touched on the psychological element in the economic recovery package.

"If...the world starts believing that this country's leadership will not play games with money i.e. with the value of the currency, that will be enough," he told the independent newsweekly Vreme.

"(But) if we don't stabilise the budget and achieve a high interest rate (on dinar accounts) in spite of sanctions, we will have to hand over the country to the Germans...They will make it stable."

One problem preventing the implementation of any recovery programme. Economic experts here say, is the absence of reliable figures in a country where the 'grey economy' has played a dominant role for the better part of two years.

"Nobody knows what (rump) Yugoslavia's social product is right now," Mr. Avramovic said. "We don't know anything for sure."

That goes for the amount of hard currency people hold outside the banking system. Estimates range from 800 million to two billion marks.

The government has promised to pay six per cent interest on dinar savings accounts but even "the Balkan factor" has so far failed to convince Serbians that their marks are safer in the bank than in the piggy bank.

By Richard Meares
Reuters

BELFAST — If you steal a car in Britain you might end up in jail. If you steal one in Northern Ireland, you may be shot through the kneecaps and crippled for life.

Outlawed guerrilla groups, sometimes known as "paramilitaries" or "paras", that rule the roost in Belfast's Protestant and Roman Catholic ghettos and beyond have their own brand of justice which terrorises the people they claim to support.

"Kneecapping", apparently learnt from mafia practices, and banishment from the province are favoured punishments for a range of crimes or for displeasing guerrilla leaders.

"It is about not adhering to their moral code, challenging their authority, drinking on the street corner or even playing loud music late at night," said Henry Robinson, a spokesman for Families Against Intimidation and Terror (FAIT).

"The paras murder, mutilate and intimidate people within their own communities to terrorise their way to power. Organised crime is a very big part of it."

FAIT was set up four years ago by Nancy Gracey, the Catholic mother of a "punishment shooting" victim.

It is the only local group publicly confronting human rights abuses committed by the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which is fighting to end British rule in Northern Ireland, and its armed Protestant foes as they police their respective territories.

"Since 1972, there have been about 2,000 punishment shootings," said Mr. Robinson, himself a reformed guerrilla who took part in a kneecapping and was jailed.

Other punishments include shooting through the elbows or ankles as well as the knees, dropping concrete slabs on the limbs and breaking fingers, or death, common for alleged informers.

Some victims have to flee Northern Ireland or face death. FAIT helps arrange safe passage and campaigns for them to be allowed to return.

"I can't say if we have caused a fall in the number of incidents but we have made an enormous difference," Mr. Robinson said from FAIT's new offices in the centre of



Demonstrators face a police force in which they have little faith (File photo)

An Irish brand of justice

divided Belfast.

"People now have somewhere to go for support and can break the silence against terrorism. We have chosen to go eyeball-to-eyeball with the white heat of sectarianism."

In the Oscar-nominated film "In The Name of the Father," only a father's desperate plea saves one character from being kneecapped by the IRA for stealing lead from roofs in the

early days of the Northern Ireland conflict 20 years ago.

These days, suspected child molesters, drug dealers and joyriders, bored youths who steal cars to go for a drive, are more likely targets. Mistakes are common.

"The paras take second or even third hand information from an acquaintance in the bar and treat it as fact," Mr. Robinson said.

FAIT, whose staff of five has dossiers crammed with pictures of victims lying in hospital with knees bandaged, is highlighting the case of Paul, a teenager beaten and twice kneecapped for "anti-social behaviour" such as joyriding.

One day, he was picked up in the street and taken down an alleyway by IRA gunmen who beat him with baseball bats, held him down, pressed a gun

to the back of each knee and fired. The pain was excruciating and the damage to his knees is permanent.

"Once you've been kneecapped you are labelled," he said. "You can't go into a pub but they are picking up the pieces."

FAIT admits many people are happy to see the gunmen clean the streets of joyriders, drug pushers and alcoholics.

The group says its files, brimming with cases of mistaken identity or alleged vendetta attacks against persons disliked by a member of a guerrilla group, should be a warning.

"You cannot isolate small sections of the community like joyriders and say they are not entitled to their human rights," said FAIT coordinator Geoff Maxwell.

The human rights watchdog Amnesty International (AI), which says the figures on punishment shootings are only the tip of an iceberg of intimidation, has been told of parents who, unable to control their unruly children, pass their names on to the IRA.

In Protestant communities, the regular police still hold sway and "justice" meted out by the gunmen often relates to alleged informers or supporters who get cold feet.

Many of Northern Ireland's Roman Catholic minority oppose British rule and distrust the police and the legal system.

"In that sort of vacuum you get pressure building up for action to be taken," said a spokesman for the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein. Paul, however, is convinced the silent masses reject summary justice.

"I don't agree the majority of people go along with it. When I was shot I got dozens of cards and messages from local people. They're scared to speak out about what's happening," he said.

FAIT denies targeting nationalists more than pro-British "loyalists".

In 1993, 60 per cent of the people FAIT dealt with were suffering from loyalist intimidation and many of them were Protestants.

Mr. Robinson, an energetic 32-year-old, said he had received death threats but would carry on. But he acknowledged guerrillas could stamp out FAIT if they decided to.

"We could be crushed or we could grow, who knows?"

Rebels, poverty and American pie in Angola

By Nicholas Shaxson
Reuters

CABINDA, Angola — They call it "little America". A haven for oil workers on Angola's steamy coast where they can play golf, tuck into a steak or order an apple pie.

Outside the Malongo Oil Base of Chevron's Gulf Oil Company, some 30 kilometres north of Cabinda city, there are rebels and poverty. Inside it is a slice of Americana in Africa.

"It's like a little city," said Tim Connor of Nashville, Tennessee, services manager for the base which is heavily guarded by the government and serves thousands of foreign workers manning offshore oil rigs along the Cabinda coastline.

"The meals are top quality. U.S. Americans tend to eat a lot and there is plenty of food all the time, mostly American and European dishes."

Outside Malongo, rebels of the Front for the Liberation of Cabinda Enclave (FLEC) are fighting a low-key independence war for the isolated enclave of Cabinda.

Cabinda is physically cut off from the rest of Angola by the Zaire River and a narrow swatch of Zaire, but its people feel even more isolated by cultural differences.

"I will never accept the

Angolan presence here, never in all my life," says Jorge Congo, a Roman Catholic priest.

Many of the enclave's 170,000 people look to Zaire and Congo for their kin and culture. "They want separation," said Lino Wilson, the central government's information representative in Cabinda.

The enclave is fertile ground for dissent. Despite riches flowing from under the sea, most of Cabinda's people live in poverty.

In Cabinda's bars and dance halls people drink Zairean beer and listen to fast-paced Zairean and Congolese music but for many life differs little from when oil was found in 1966.

Flares from offshore rigs are not visible in the village of Tumba, 25 kilometres southeast of Malongo. Inhabitants plant crops and hunt. The last rains were poor, they say, and food is scarce.

A doctor at the provincial hospital said malnutrition is not a serious problem. Tropical rains are plentiful most years and many people farm, fish or hunt. But "poverty-related diseases" such as diarrhoea were rife, he said.

"We are really suffering here in Cabinda," said Francisco Comprido, a Roman

Catholic missionary from East Cabinda who fled to Tumba after government soldiers looking for rebels raided his village.

In recent years the FLEC has staged isolated attacks on oil company vehicles but inflicted scant damage to installations. There are no reliable figures on casualties from skirmishes between rebels and government troops which go largely unreported by the state-run media.

Fernando Soma, clinical director of Cabinda's main hospital, said three or four civilians were admitted monthly with combat wounds, some from landmines. He did not know the casualty rate.

FLEC's struggle has been overshadowed by resumption in late 1992 of the civil war, waged for 16 years between the formerly Marxist Luanda government and UNITA rebels.

The war has devastated most of Angola but left Cabinda largely untouched. Rebel leader Jonas Savimbi's UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) has not acted on its repeated threats to attack foreign oil installations in Cabinda.

Some FLEC officials say UNITA, whose aim is control of all of Angola, has no place

in their enclave which has a culture more similar to neighbouring French-speaking Zaire and Congo.

"We have never accepted their presence here. If it were not for this problem with the government we would fight them," said Bel Chiorhe Tati, a FLEC official who lives in Cabinda city.

Oil workers have little contact with Cabinda's troubles. They fly in and out of Malongo by helicopter to reach offshore platforms sitting on Angola's richest oilfields, pumping some 300,000 barrels of crude a day.

The expatriates, mostly Americans, Britons, Portuguese, Indians, Italians and French, are forbidden from entering Cabinda except on official business.

Army Major Walter Nunes said the ruling dated from the time when Cuban troops and Soviet advisers were in Cabinda and it was feared there would be confrontations with American oil workers.

The Cubans and Soviets have long gone but Tim Henley, Malongo's general operations manager, said Cabinda was still not considered safe.

"I know a lot of our people would like to visit the town," he said, "but... we have all the facilities we need in the camp."

U.S. working for resumption of talks

(Continued from page 2)

forward to working with Israel to unleash its technological skill on the entire region. In a new era of peace, it can do that.

And in all of these matters, the message is clear. The U.S. stands by Israel in an unshakable partnership for peace. It is a partnership which has produced the greatest advances towards peace for all people of the Middle East in the entire long, tragic history of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

One of the particular efforts that I've been involved in, that Norman referred to, is an effort called the Builders for Peace. It is an unusual group which got its beginning on September 13th, about two

hours after the meeting on the South Lawn between Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat.

I went upstairs to the Executive Office Building auditorium, and members — many of you were there, and a good number of Arab-Americans were there for the first joint briefing on the process that had just been on display on the South Lawn.

I was late arriving because the ceremony on the South Lawn had taken longer than expected, and by the time I arrived, the feeling in the room was electric because the handshake on the South Lawn had been replicated by individuals in that room a hundred times over.

And in the discussion, it became clear that there was a tremendous desire for the men and women gathered in that room to see what they as individuals could do to try to help bolster the peace process. And I made the suggestion that perhaps an American group might be formed from both communities to try to stimulate the development of an economic infrastructure in Gaza and Jericho to make it more possible for the peace process to move forward.

And so this group was formed, and it's unique in many ways. It has two presidents, if you will, Mel Levine and Jim Zogby, a major respected leader in the Jewish community and the president of the Arab-American Institute. For years, these two indi-

viduals were on opposite sides of virtually every issue related to the Middle East, and in fact they still are. But the potential for making common cause in behalf of peace was clearly evident. And so we organized this group.

And during the meetings, as the individuals here who have been a part of this group can tell you, the spirit has been very positive, and we have been making a great deal of progress. I am very, very encouraged about it.

If we push on, if we do not give up, I am confident that we can achieve the progress and the resolution that we all seek, and not just in transforming relations between Israel and the Palestinians, but between Israel and all of her Arab neighbours.



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Australia considers allowing more immigrants

ADELAIDE, Australia (AP) — Australia is considering raising the number of immigrants it allows to match a forecast increase in economic growth.

Immigration Minister Nick Bolles has said that economic and social climates are right for the government to consider moderate increases in immigration programme after several years of no increases because of recession and high unemployment.

"I can't say the numbers, all I will say is that I think we're getting to a stage where we can look at moderate increases in our programme," he said.

From July 1992 to June 1993 Australia had the lowest level of immigration in a decade, with 76,330 people entering the country.

Other top countries included Hong Kong, Vietnam, the former Yugoslavia, the Philippines and China.

Israel envoy says China embraces former 'enemy'

BEIJING (R) — Israeli Industry and Trade Minister Micha Harish said Tuesday that Sino-Israeli trade will expand rapidly now that China no longer sees Israel as an enemy.

"It's really striking to see how friendly the attitude is here toward Israel and the Jewish people," he said.

Mr. Harish said capital and technology-rich but labour-poor Israel was finding an eager partner in China, eager for the hard currency income from reexports across Asia.

"It's unbelievable to see," Mr. Harish said in an interview after what he described as a rewarding series of high-level meetings with Chinese officials including Vice Premier Li Lang and Foreign Trade Minister Wu Yi.

"This didn't happen in 1992. Apparently there was an undercurrent, like in other Asian countries and India. The country (China) was an enemy of Israel," he said.

China and Israel established diplomatic ties in February 1992, ending decades of enmity stemming mainly from Beijing's solidarity and support for Arab countries.

Bilateral trade has grown rapidly since then. Chinese customs figures show that China's 1993 exports to Israel rose 498 per cent from 1992 to reach \$76.39 million and its imports from Israel rose 96 per cent to \$75.93 million.

Israeli statistics show bilateral trade at \$100 million last year with a \$10 million surplus for Israel.

Mr. Harish said trade would grow further due to new bilateral cooperation, including two minor trade pacts signed Tuesday, and Israel's overall trade and investment push in Asia, where it was long a political parish.

"In about four or five years we will be in the many hundreds of millions of dollars of

trade and investment (in China)," he said. "If China keeps growing the way it has our cooperation will bring fast results."

Wary of overheating and inflation, Beijing is hoping to rein economic growth back to 10 per cent from the sizzling 13 per cent rates registered in 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Harish said 30 Israeli industrial leaders accompanying him on the trade mission were expecting to sign at least three business deals while in China, but gave no estimates of their value.

One project will transfer world-leading fibre-optic cable technology to a Shanghai firm. Others included metal and plastic-coating ventures and an advanced silo system for grain storage — a crucial need in China where up to a quarter of the grain harvest is lost to water damage, vermin and poor transport.

Jordan records modest growth in industrial production in '93

By a Jordan Times Staff reporter

AMMAN — Overall industrial production registered only a 1.7 per cent growth during 1993 although some sectors showed significant growth rates, according to official figures.

The general industrial production index set by the government rose by 3.6 points to close at 212.7 points, while the general revised industrial production index (which includes phosphate and potash output) went up by 3.3 points to 215.6 points, according to the December 1993 statistical bulletin of the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ).

The figures compare with 16.6 points rise in the general index and 12.4 points in the revised index registered during the year 1992, the bulletin said.

A sector-by-sector review showed that the sharpest decline was registered in the pharmaceutical sector. The sector's index registered a decline of 63.4 points to close at the end of the year at 231.8 points.

Another decline was seen in the production of food items. The food items index dropped from 162.5 points to 144.8 points during the year compared with a rise of 62.7 points during the previous year. Other sectors where output dropped included animal feed, leather and footwear, phosphate, detergents and soap as well as batteries.

The general index and other indices of various sectors of industrial production (processing, mining and quarrying, chemicals and construction materials in addition to several other categories) were set at 100 based on 1979 production figures. As such, the index figures also reflect the overall rise or drop in production in various sectors since 1979.

The bulletin, giving a sector by sector index, showed that: — Soft drinks production went up by 44.9 points to close at 173.1 points

— Alcoholic drinks production rose by 2.1 points to close at 90.3

— Fooder output declined by 18.3 points to close 87

— Cigarettes and matches production rose by 10.7 points to close at 102.3

— Clothes and textiles production rose by 12.5 points to close at 131.4

— Footwear and leather production dropped by 3.1 points to close at 128.5

— Plastic and sponge output rose by 9.2 points to close at 141.5

— Pharmaceuticals declined by 63.4 points to close at 231.8

— Paints output rose by 14.6 points to close at 131.6

— Detergents and soap production declined by 15.9 points to close at 187.1

— The general index for construction materials remained unchanged at 223.9 points

— Iron production declined by 41.5 points to close at 153.8

— Cement production (including clinker) shot up by 59 points to close at 546

— Wood products output went up 1.5 points to close at 57.1

— Other construction materials output went up by 8.8 points to close at 228

— Petroleum products output went up by 1.5 points to close at 170.5

— Phosphate output dropped by 2.7 points to close at 149.7 points

— Paper and cardboard production rose by 53.1 points to close at 302.4

— Batteries output dropped 11.4 points to close at 101.8

— Electricity production rose by 45.5 points to close at 524.4

The CBJ bulletin gave the following figures for output in various sectors during the year 1993 (the bulletin used the old British/American system to give the figures and the Jordan Times converted into the metric system. The figures in brackets give the corresponding figures for 1992):

— Phosphates 3.79 million tonnes (3.86 million tonnes)

— Potash 1.35 million tonnes (1.13 million tonnes)

— Fodder 39,330 tonnes (48,510 tonnes)

— Alcoholic drinks 6.57 million litres (6.25 million litres)

— Cigarettes 3.46 million (3.09 million)

— Textiles 1,037 million metres (1,001 million metres)

— Upper leather 233,200 square metres

— Sole leather and wool 53,370 tonnes (44,100 tonnes)

— Fertilizers 42,290 tonnes (49,824 tonnes)

— Chemical acids 763,920 tonnes (999,000 tonnes)

— Detergents 29,160 tonnes (30,870 tonnes)

— Cement (including clinker) 2.76 million tonnes (2,466 million tonnes)

— Iron 163,260 tonnes (211,230 tonnes)

— Metallic pigments 15,210 tonnes (13,230 tonnes)

— Petroleum products 2.52 million tonnes (2.54 million tonnes)

— Paper and cardboard 14,400 tonnes (15,300 tonnes)

— Liquid batteries 77,400 (86,700)

— Electricity 4.43 billion kilowatts (4.06 billion kilowatts)

Russia warns Ukraine about gas payments

ESPOO, Finland (R) — Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin has warned that Russia's patience would end soon if Ukraine did not pay its debts for natural gas imports.

Mr. Chernomyrdin said he was worried about the situation.

"We hope that the Ukraine government sees it is time to pay the money back," Mr. Chernomyrdin told a news conference.

"If they cannot afford to pay then we must not sell (gas) to

them," he said.

"For the time being we are holding out. But I warn that our tolerance will end soon," Mr. Chernomyrdin added.

Russia's Gazprom Company agreed to restore gas supplies to Ukraine, at least until April 10.

The state-controlled firm declared a month-long truce with Ukraine after slashing supplies a week earlier in protest over Kiev's failure to pay a debt of 1.5 trillion rubles (\$900 million).

The supply cuts forced the former Soviet republic, which relies on Russia for 60 per cent of its gas needs, to take emergency measures to curb domestic consumption.

Gazprom Chairman Rem Vyakhirev told a Moscow news conference: "If we do not restore order together by April 10, deliveries of gas to Ukraine

will be cut off completely."

Mr. Chernomyrdin said: "We give them very much concessions. We will of course not forgive them (their debt). But we can still take it. We give them extensions (on payments)."

"We hope that the Ukraine government sees it is time to pay the money back," he said.

Iran budget, tailored to low oil prices, gets final approval

TEHRAN (R) — Iran's budget for the year starting March 21, including \$2.3 billion for defence and law-enforcement, received final approval Tuesday.

Parliamentary speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, announcing the approval of the \$9.8 trillion rial (\$39.9 billion) budget by the Guardian Council, told a news conference that liberal economic reforms should be slowed down to ease pressure on the poor.

The council, which vets laws for conformity with Islam and the constitution, ratified the budget after parliament dropped a reference to interest and made other minor changes in the bill.

"The main message of this budget is economising," Mr. Nateq-Nouri said.

Parliament approved the budget last week after a debate dominated by concern about low oil prices and Iran's mounting foreign debt.

It had cut the government's projected revenue by 10 per cent. Mr. Nateq-Nouri said it reduced expenditures in various sectors by between seven and 13 per cent according to their priority. The budget is nominally balanced.

"We do not accept fast-paced reforms at the expense of losing the vulnerable strata," he replied when asked if the MPs' rejection of fuel price rises amounted to slowing down President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's free-market reform plan.

"I believe we should carry out these reforms, but first we must create the social safety net, otherwise the vulnerable strata cannot bear the pressure," Mr. Nateq-Nouri said.

He said the budget earmarked four trillion rials (\$2.3 billion) for defence and law enforcement.

Mohammad Majdara, member of the parliament's plan and budget committee, told Reuters the allocation covered the army, revolutionary guards and police. He did not say how much would be spent on buying weapons from abroad.

"The four trillion rials fi-

gure is 7.5 per cent more than the current year's. But considering 20 per cent inflation, the defence and law-enforcement budget has actually declined by 12.5 per cent," he said.

Some Western and Arab Gulf states have voiced concern about Iran's recent arms purchases, including two Russian submarines. Iran rejects charges of militarism, saying its military spending is a fraction of that of its Arab neighbours like Saudi Arabia.

About 60 per cent of the overall budget is that of state banks and companies. The rest — 32.3 trillion rials (\$18.5 billion) — is the government's budget.

In the budget debate which started in January, deputies cut the government's oil revenue projection to \$10.15 billion — some \$2 billion to \$3 billion below the current year's estimate.

But the overall budget figure is still 28 per cent above the current year's approved level and likely to fuel inflation.

Mr. Nateq-Nouri estimated Iran's overdue commercial debts would amount to between \$6 billion and \$7 billion on March 20, after refinancing deals worth a total \$4.3 billion agreed with German banks and Japanese trading companies since last month.

Article 29 of the budget authorises the use of \$6 billion in foreign credits, mainly to build dams and oil and gas projects.

One of the points the Guardian Council had objected to was a clause in article 29 which said the government should pay the "average international interest rate" on such credits.

Iran's 1993 no-interest banking law outlawed payment by Iranian banks of interest, a form of usury banned under Islam. But interest is inevitably involved in Iran's foreign dealings.

In a session last Monday, deputies argued that the offending clause was intended to prevent the government from using high-interest foreign credit.

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	1.6948/58	Deutchemarks
	1.9048/58	Dutch guilders
	1.4405/15	Swiss francs
	34.93/97	Belgian francs
	5.7639/89	French francs
	1673.1/4.6	Italian lire
	106.15/25	Japanese yen
	7.8777/77	Swedish crowns
	7.3450/00	Norwegian crowns
	6.6180/30	Danish crowns
One sterling	\$1.4911/21	
One ounce of gold	\$386.00/386.50	

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Mandela receives tumultuous welcome in Bophuthatswana

MMABATHO, South Africa (Agencies) — ANC President Nelson Mandela received a tumultuous welcome in Bophuthatswana Tuesday after South Africa's weekend overthrow of homeland leader Lucas Mangope.

Pretoria took over the nominally independent homeland after Mr. Mangope, a bitter foe of the African National Congress (ANC), refused to guarantee free campaigning for South Africa's first democratic elections in late April.

Residents lining the streets to welcome Mr. Mandela said they were overjoyed to see him and he represented freedom to them.

His cavalcade drove from the main air base on Mmabatho's outskirts, occupied for a day last Friday by armed white rightwingers from South Africa, to the South Africa embassy which now effectively controls the homeland.

The white rightists failed in their bid to keep Mr. Mangope in power and dispersed when South African troops arrived.

Ambassador Tjaart Van Der Walt and Job Mokgoro, a black official from the Development Bank of Southern Africa, were appointed administrators and are expected to establish a council to regulate the homeland until the April 26-28 elections.

Mr. Mandela, who is widely expected to emerge from the poll as South Africa's first black president, addressed thousands of enthusiastic civil

servants at the Mmabatho Convention Centre.

He promised that their jobs, pay and pensions were secure. Unrest first broke out among Bophuthatswana's two million people when civil servants demonstrated to demand their pensions be paid before the election because of fears over the homeland's future.

The 10 black homelands created by Pretoria during the apartheid era are due to disappear after the elections, which Mr. Mangope had originally vowed to boycott.

"We want to normalise the situation here. Although we fought the homeland system for many years, the civil service is going to be necessary when we have a democratic government," Mr. Mandela said.

"All of you have experience of running a government and we rely on you," he said.

Mr. Mandela warned them a new government might have to rationalise or trim the civil service. But he added: "None of you are going to throw in the streets. You will be placed in other jobs. It does not matter whether you are black or white."

Mr. Mandela also urged students at the convention centre to return to their schools to "work for a better tomorrow."

Other ANC leaders arrived in Mmabatho Tuesday, including ANC women's league President Winnie Mandela, estranged wife of the ANC president. They travelled to

Mmabatho in separate vehicles, witnesses said.

At the meeting with business owners, many of whom had their shops looted and burned last week, Mr. Mandela said he regretted the damage but appealed for perseverance.

"We urge you to rebuild your buildings because our country can never grow without the development of business," he said.

Mr. Mangope and his supporters have blamed the ANC for the destruction, saying it incited the uprising. When an audience member asked if there would be government assistance for victims of the looting, ANC foreign affairs director Thabo Mbeki would only say the subject was under discussion.

Meanwhile, gunmen killed six people and wounded seven near Empangeni on South Africa's Natal north coast Tuesday, police said.

Police spokesman Major Bala Naidoo said the gunmen opened fire on people in Enseni township at about 4 a.m. (0200 GMT). He had no other details and would not comment on a motive.

At least two people were reported killed Tuesday in the tense black township of Umlazi, as ANC supporters protested the occupation of a site where they were to have rallied earlier in the week.

The ANC was forced to hold its campaign rally in the streets Sunday after the rival Inkatha Freedom Party, which opposes

the April election, took over the Umlazi Stadium set aside for the ANC gathering.

Early Tuesday, hundreds of ANC supporters began marching through Umlazi to present a memorandum to police accusing them of inaction Sunday. The memorandum also demanded the removal from the township of the South African police's Internal Stability Unit, which the ANC accuses of instigating violence.

A local resident, Mildred Moya, said she was walking with another woman when two carloads of armed men drove by and shot at them. Her companion was shot in the head and killed, said Moya. She alleged the killers were in uniforms of the KwaZulu Police Force.

KwaZulu is the Zulu, tribal homeland, which is Inkatha's stronghold. It has its own police force and has been accused by the ANC of atrocities against political opponents.

A local peace monitor on hand to observe the day's events said a dead body was also found in a shack Tuesday on the edge of the township. The monitor, Stephanie Miller, said the body was in an ANC-dominated area of the township.

Umlazi, outside Durban, is in Natal province, the area hardest-hit by political violence between the IFP and ANC. Violence has soared in recent weeks because of Inkatha's resistance to the April 26-28 election.



African National Congress President Nelson Mandela laughs as he is given a rapturous welcome by the crowd at a rally in Sebokeng near Johannesburg during his election campaign in the Transvaal (AFP photo)

Bosnia Serbs refuse convoy to Maglaj

SARAJEVO (R) — Bosnian Serb authorities refused Tuesday to grant permission for an urgently needed relief convoy to enter the besieged Muslim enclave of Maglaj, United Nations relief officials said.

The convoy had been planned to leave from Zenica in central Bosnia Wednesday morning for the short drive north into the city of Maglaj, where at least 10,000 people have been under siege by Serb and Croat forces since the middle of 1993.

A total of 103,000 people, most of them Muslims, are trapped in the Maglaj pocket, which has relied for months on nightly airdrops of food. The last U.N. convoy to reach the enclave gained entry on Oct. 25.

The United Nations has been denied access to the area repeatedly by Serbs in recent months.

U.N. relief officials said the latest refusal came from Bosnian Serb officials in their self-styled capital of Pale, not from field commanders who have been blamed for most of the delays in the past.

The U.N. Security Council Monday condemned Bosnian Serb intransigence and called for an immediate lifting of the siege and access for all humanitarian convoys.

The United States and Russia will employ a mix of inducements and threats to push the

Bosnian Serbs into joining a budding Croat-Muslim Federation in Bosnia or ceding to it conquered land, diplomats say.

Incentives to board the superpower peace train in the Balkans, they say, would include the right to keep some territory taken in battle and revocation of U.N. sanctions imposed for aggression against Bosnia.

If the Serbs cling to the 70 per cent of Bosnia they hold and keep waging war to grab more, a U.N. arms embargo could be partially lifted to exempt the Croats and Muslims.

Western diplomats sketched the next stage in Bosnia's peace process following a U.S.-brokered Croat-Muslim deal to set up a decentralised cantonal state with a joint army, ending a bloody scramble for ethnically mixed territory.

Russian peace envoy Vitaly Churkin began shuttle diplomacy this week to usher the Serbs, linked to Russia by Slav heritage and Orthodox religion, into the U.S.-sponsored peace plan to forge a durable, overall settlement.

After meeting Serbian and Croatian leaders in Belgrade and Zagreb Monday, Mr. Churkin said the federation could be a "stepping stone" to a full peace settlement but that Serb interests had to be recognised.

"There are three ethnic communities there who have basically equal rights. If there are sovereign rights for Croats and Muslims then the assumption must be that there are also sovereign rights for Serbs," Mr. Churkin said.

The Serbs have hinted at marginal territorial concessions but nothing close to the 20-30 per cent demanded by Croat and Muslim leaders keen to repatriate refugees and create an economically viable state with defensible borders.

"The plan now is to go to the Croats and Muslims. Ask them what their territorial bottom line is and then go to the Serbs and get them to negotiate with a mixture of inducements and threats," a senior Western diplomat said.

"You say to the Serbs, you already have 70 per cent, in return for recognition of some of your gains you need to give the Muslims and Croats some good quality territory."

"If the Serbs do not play ball, they run into the possibility of renewed efforts to lift the arms embargo."

The world would also ensure that ethnically cleansed territory would be placed in indefinite quarantine.

"We'd devise a way of 'poisoning' property acquired by ethnic cleansing," a diplomat said.

4 die in shooting spree at U.S. firm

SANTA FE SPRINGS, Calif. (R) — A man who had been fired from his job at an electronics plant returned Monday and went on a shooting rampage, killing three former co-workers and wounding two before taking his own life.

Scores of panic-stricken employees of Extron Electronics Inc. dropped to the floor or ran screaming from the building as the gunman yelled "get down" in Vietnamese and opened fire, witnesses said.

The suspect, identified as Tuan Nguyen, 29, walked from one corner of the building to the other, calmly selecting his victims and shooting them at point-blank range with a .38-

calibre pistol, police said. A man and a woman died inside the computer parts plant in the Los Angeles suburb of Santa Fe Springs, and a second man who was shot in the chest succumbed to his injuries at a local hospital.

Mr. Nguyen and all of his victims were of Asian descent, and though he had worked with some of them, it was unclear if he targeted them in advance, authorities said.

Mr. Nguyen had worked at Extron for 10 weeks but was fired 2-1/2 weeks ago for poor performance during his probationary period, said Bill Martin, a spokesman for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

In an interview conducted when he left the company, Mr. Nguyen made no threats, and the motive for his attack was not known, Mr. Martin said. Mr. Nguyen was believed to be Vietnamese but authorities were unable to confirm his nationality.

Mr. Nguyen managed to bypass the company's elaborate security system Monday by entering through a rear door that had been left open for ventilation as temperatures soared into the upper 80s.

About 120 employees — many of them South East Asian immigrants — were in the building at the time of the shootings, and many fled through the exits, police said.

Australian government rides high; opposition divided

CANBERRA (R) — The government of Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating is riding high, with an opinion poll Tuesday showing it ahead of the opposition for the first time since its shock election victory a year ago.

Shrugging off recent ministerial resignations and with the economy now rapidly speeding away from the early-1990s recession, Mr. Keating has surged ahead of opposition leader John Hewson, who is battling to keep his job.

The poll in the Australian Newspaper said the Labour Party, this week celebrating the first anniversary of its unexpected 1993 election win, now led with 45 per cent support to the Liberal-National opposition's 42 per cent.

Mr. Keating was the preferred prime minister of 46 per cent of voters compared with 25 per cent for opposition leader John Hewson.

Voters, who almost always back the opposition in the middle of a government's term of office, swung unexpectedly towards Labour in a by-election on the weekend.

Clinton seeks normalcy but troubles stalk him

BOSTON (Agencies) — It was supposed to be the day the Clinton White House got back on track, but it was interrupted by something like a train wreck as the administration was hit by the resignation of another top official under a cloud.

President Bill Clinton's Monday began in Detroit with the president speaking about a favourite subject. The reviving U.S. economy.

By late afternoon a saddened president was in Boston trying to explain his latest personnel problem and minimise the damage to his administration.

An old friend of Mr. Clinton's from Arkansas, Associate Attorney General Webster Hubbell, unexpectedly resigned. The resignation came amid questions about billing practices at the Rose Law Firm in Little Rock, Arkansas, where he was an associate of first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton.

It was another setback to an administration already staggering from the Whitewater affair and trying to refocus attention on policy.

As I said, I have no knowledge of this," Mr. Clinton told reporters in Boston who asked about possible harm to his administration. "This is, to me, more of a personal deal for Webb Hubbell."

The president launched a three-day trip Sunday that was supposed to concentrate on the economy, including a speech at the International Jobs Conference in Detroit, and to get away from Washington and two weeks of unseemly Whitewater headlines.

"Whitewater" takes its name from the Whitewater Development Corp., a now defunct Arkansas real estate venture in which then-Arkansas Governor Clinton and his wife invested.

A special counsel is investigating Whitewater's ties to the failed Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan in the 1980s. The scandal exploded in Washington this month with word that 10 administration officials had been subpoenaed to testify about several meetings between White House and Treasury Department staff concerning a federal probe into the Whitewater affair.

The Republicans cried "coverup" and on March 5, White House Counsel Bernard Nussbaum was forced to resign after admitting he took part in the meetings on the investigation with treasury aides.

But when Mr. Hubbell's resignation burst into the headlines in the afternoon, it bumped Mr. Clinton's remarks about global growth and jobs right out of the spotlight.

Television newscasts Monday evening focused on the president's problems again, including rebashes of the

Whitewater scandal, even though the administration asserted there was no link between the affair and Mr. Hubbell's decision to step down.

Mr. Hubbell's name, however, has been linked to Whitewater. His father-in-law is said to have borrowed money from Madison and was an executive of a Madison real estate subsidiary.

There had also been questions on whether the Rose Law Firm where Mr. Hubbell worked had misled the government about previous work done for the failed Madison Thrift. In November, Mr. Hubbell removed himself from any involvement in Whitewater matters.

As Mr. Clinton sought to distance himself from Mr. Hubbell's resignation Monday, a senior White House official admitted, "we can't always control the timing of these things."

If the president had any bad feelings about Mr. Hubbell's resignation, "he didn't express them," the official said.

But by Monday evening the president was sounding defensive, charging that Republicans opposed to his policies were "committed to the politics of personal destruction."

"I never did them (the Republicans) the way they are doing us today in Washington D.C.," he told a Democratic fundraiser in Boston. "It is wrong. And it is not good for the United States of America."

Meanwhile Hillary Rodham Clinton reiterated Monday that she made mistakes in handling the Whitewater affair, but "you live and learn and you go on."

"When this is all over, it's going to be the same story we've been telling for two years: We made a bad investment, we lost money and there's really not much more to add to it," Mrs. Clinton told reporters in a brief news conference outside a Colorado National Guard field hospital.

The first lady said she was "deeply saddened" by the resignation Monday of Mr. Hubbell.

The Clintons said they lost \$69,000 on their investment into Whitewater.

"We know we lost money. We lost a bunch of money for us," she said. "Goodness knows what you all would be saying if we made any money. I'm glad we did lose money."

"We're just going to do whatever is appropriate to do. That's what we've always done over the last 15 years or so we have dealt with this," she said. She said it would not deter her from fighting for health reform.

She steered clear of Whitewater in an earlier address in Boulder, Colorado, where she drew cheers from University of Colorado students at an outdoor rally when she exhorted them to rally behind "the promise of change" that her husband brought to Washington.

Japanese police quiz beautician on dismembered body

TOKYO (R) — Japanese police are questioning a female beauty salon manager in connection with the grisly murder of a hairdresser whose torso and severed limbs have been found in southern Japan, news reports said Tuesday. The crime came to light in early March with the discovery of a woman's left arm in a plastic rubbish bag at a motorway service area. The arm was identified as belonging to Mayumi Iwasaki, a 34-year-old hairdresser from Fukuoka, who was last seen on Feb. 28 at a farewell party being given for her by salon colleagues. Later, the torso, with breasts and internal organs horribly mutilated, was found in two pieces in a railway station locker. But the head and some other body parts have yet to surface. Television news showed the suspect — her head and most of her body covered by a coat — being bundled into a car and driven to police headquarters for questioning. A police spokesman refused to comment on reports that detectives were poised to formally arrest the 38-year-old woman, and that they planned to question her male friend. The reports said police suspected the crime might have been work-related. Iwasaki, apparently a popular and valued hairdresser, was moving to a new salon taking most of her clients with her.

Rape cases increase in Vietnam

HANOI (R) — Rape is on the rise in Vietnam, with 400 cases in the first nine months of 1993, 22 per cent more than in the corresponding period of 1992, an official women's newspaper reported. Calling for tougher sentencing and a crackdown on pornography, the weekly Women of Vietnam detailed four cases in Hanoi in which the victims were children aged between three and nine. It said more than 30 per cent of rape victims were teenagers and 70 per cent of rapists were aged 18 to 30. In several cases, the rapists killed their victims. While death is the maximum penalty for rape in Vietnam, the newspaper said one man was jailed for just six years in 1992 for raping a three-year-old girl. It said "authorised sentences" — apparently meaning longer jail terms or the death penalty — should be applied "to awaken and to educate" offenders. "At the same time, in order to prevent (rape) effectively, it is necessary to build up a healthy way of living... and resolutely eliminate from social life those pornographic publications that arouse violence and sex," it added.

Cambodia opens an exclusive gun club

PHNOM PENH (R) — Cambodia, battered by more than two decades of civil war, has opened an exclusive club catering to those whose interests sail run to gunfire, and whose members roster reads like a Cambodian "who's who."

"The Cambodian Sport and Entertainment Club has been established with the aim to provide a place of recreation and relaxation to the most powerful, influential, prominent and wealthy people," says a brochure. The club is the brainchild of Hong Kong-based German businessman Thomas Bover and his Cambodian counterpart Ly Soane, and its roster reads like a "who's who" of Cambodia's rich and powerful. Its "patron" is Cambodia's second Prime Minister Hun Sen. And his supporting cast of honorary members includes Sar Kheng, Cambodia's influential interior and national security minister, Defence Minister Tea Chamrath, Ek Sereyath, secretary of state for defence and Khieu Kanharith, secretary of state for information. Included in the club's facilities on the capital's southern outskirts are a skeet-shooting (clay pigeon) range, a golf driving range, angling ponds and a tennis court. There are even personal hovercrafts for members' use. And to quench a thirst hard-earned on the pistol range — the club sells small arms — there is a karaoke lounge and bar.

Membership is restricted to 200 people, including 65 Cambodians. It comes in three categories: Honorary, VIP and regular and starts at \$5,000. Joining requires invitation or introduction by members, and applications are "thoroughly examined by the board of directors and honorary membership committee," the brochure states.

Seoul, Tokyo say N. Korea hampered inspectors

SEOUL (R) — South Korea and Japan said Tuesday North Korea had apparently hampered U.N. experts' efforts to determine whether the Stalinist state is secretly diverting plutonium for a weapons programme.

"There were some indications the inspectors ran into trouble. But I am not able to say specifically what the problems were," said a senior Seoul government official who requested anonymity.

He was commenting on local news reports that the inspectors failed to conduct some crucial checks, including taking samples from a "radiochemical laboratory" at Yongbyon, north of Pyongyang.

"We have to wait further before making a final judgment on whether the North has broken its promise to ensure a smooth completion of the inspection," he said.

A Japanese Foreign Ministry official said Tuesday the Tokyo government had been told by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that its six-man inspection team faced several curbs during a two-week visit which ended Tuesday.

The United States has made unimpeded IAEA inspection of seven North Korean sites a key condition for high-level talks with Pyongyang in Geneva at the end of next week. A South Korean News report Tuesday said the talks were now off.

The promised U.S.-North Korean talks are part of a package negotiated by Washington, Pyongyang and Seoul to defuse tensions on the Korean peninsula and stop North Korea from proceeding with a suspected nuclear arms programme.

If the IAEA experts say they were prevented from carrying out a meaningful examination of the nuclear facilities, however, the deal could be in danger.

"Certain restrictions were placed on what they could do at one or two locations and it's a question of how seriously these will be viewed (when the team reports back)," IAEA spokesman David Kyd told Reuters Monday.

If such curbs were imposed, or if the IAEA confirmed nuclear materials were diverted for military use, the agency could eventually take the matter to the U.N. Security Council.

Even if this month's visit did pass successfully, the IAEA would be unable to confirm once and for all that Pyongyang has told the truth in flatly denying any nuclear arms ambitions.

For more than a year, the agency has unsuccessfully sought access to two undeclared sites at Yongbyon,

NEWS IN BRIEF

Composer named Greek culture minister

ATHENS (R) — Composer Thanos Mikroutsikos will be sworn in this week as Greece's culture minister, a government spokesman said Tuesday. Mr. Mikroutsikos, the former director of Athens' Concert Hall, has served as deputy culture minister since October, when the Socialist Party won national elections. He will be sworn in Wednesday, replacing Melina Mercouri, who died 10 days ago following an operation for lung cancer.

Georgians to join Russian border troops

TBILISI (R) — Georgians will join Russian border troops guarding the frontiers of the Transcaucasian Republic, Georgia's Defence Ministry said Tuesday. Under an agreement signed Monday, Georgian conscripts and volunteers will join Russian troops along the 200 kilometre frontier of the former Soviet republic with Turkey. A Defence Ministry spokesman said the agreement was signed in Tbilisi by Russian Border Guards Commander Andrei Nikolayev and his Georgian counterpart Valery Chkhaidze. Georgia, one of the most independent-minded of the former Soviet republics, joined the Commonwealth of Independent States last year when its integrity was threatened by an internal feud and a separatist rebellion. Earlier this year it signed a political treaty with Russia. The two countries agreed to cooperate in guarding Georgia's border, seen by both as a Commonwealth frontier.

U.K. defence chief's mistress tells all

LONDON (AP) — The things people do for national security: expose a married boyfriend, pose in a black negligee for a tabloid newspaper.

Bienvendida Perez-Blanco claims deep concerns about national security moved her to tell her story of an affair with Britain's most senior military officer, prompting him to resign as chief of the defence staff.

The News Of The World, a sensational Sunday tabloid, devoted five pages to the relationship between Sir Peter Harding, 60, and his 32-year-old Spanish mistress.

Sir Peter is married and has four children, he resigned Sunday after the paper hit the streets.

The copyrighted story included photos of Ms. Perez-Blanco in black lace stockings and see-through negligee, and excerpts from love letters.

"Your mind is agile, deep and challenging," says one letter allegedly written by Sir Peter. "Your body is incomparable and your face utterly beautiful. You move like a gazelle, dress like a queen and have impeccable taste. We are soul-mates."

London's Evening Standard newspaper reported Monday that Ms. Perez-Blanco, the ex-wife of a former Conservative member of parliament, was paid £175,000 (about \$262,000) for the story.

Her publicity, Max Clifford, confirmed there was a financial arrangement but would not discuss the amount.

Sir Peter and Ms. Perez-Blanco met for lunch at a central London hotel Friday, and the tabloid said one of its reporters eavesdropped from the next table. The paper's photographers snapped the pair kissing on the hotel steps as Sir Peter helped the spike-heeled blonde into a cab.

Mr. Clifford's office said Ms. Perez-Blanco was not available for interviews until next week.

after the News Of The World's follow-up story: The Secret Love Romps.

The News Of The World quoted her as saying Sir Peter was careless about security.

"If I had been an enemy agent, it would have been the easiest thing in the world to organise his assassination. Or if someone was blackmailing me, I might have been forced to give details of his movements," she was quoted as saying.

The BBC asked Mr. Clifford if a cheese cake photo in the News Of The World was the best way to address security risks.

"I think it was a very effective way, yes," Mr. Clifford replied. "A lot of people are aware of it now. If I had picked up the phone to someone in the Ministry of Defence and said this, I don't think they would have taken any notice at all."

Mr. Clifford also represented Antonia De Sancha, an aspiring actress whose affair with former cabinet Minister David Mellor contributed to his resignation in 1992.

Ms. Perez-Blanco married Sir Anthony Buck in 1990 when he was a member of parliament. Sir Anthony, 45, retired from politics and his marriage broke up last year.

Sir Anthony confirmed Saturday that his former wife had a "very intimate relationship" with Sir Peter.

British press reports said Ms. Perez-Blanco recently married an art dealer. Sir Peter was only the latest casualty of a recent burst of exposures. Government ministers Timothy Woe and Lord Caidness resigned in January after reports of adultery. Conservative lawmaker Hartley Booth, a Methodist lay minister, resigned his minor post in the Health Ministry after a young woman shared some of his amorous poetry with a newspaper.

* NEWS IN BRIEF

German groups campaign to stop match

BERLIN (R) — A loose alliance of left-wing German groups, worried that neo-Nazis might use a soccer match between England and Germany on Hitler's birthday next month for fascist demonstrations, are campaigning to change the date and venue. The match is set for April 20 — the 105th anniversary of Hitler's birth — in Berlin's Olympic Stadium, site of the 1936 Olympics which Hitler used to showcase his theories of Aryan racial superiority. "We're strongly opposed to this game on this date in this stadium," said Thomas Nord, deputy chairman of the reformed Communist Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) in Berlin Tuesday. "The Olympic stadium has fascist traditions and is the worst possible place for this match." Nord said left-wing groups — including the PDS, Union Workers Against Racism, Anti-Fascist Soccer Fans and the Humanist Union — were planning a demonstration in front of Berlin's city hall April 9. He said the groups would press organisers to change the date and venue. But he said there would be no demonstrations at the stadium nor any attempts to disrupt the match if their protests prove unsuccessful. The controversial soccer friendly was originally scheduled for Hamburg.

Paris wants to reclaim Grand Prix

PARIS (R) — A new athletics stadium opening in Paris later this year could stage annual Grand Prix meetings in the French capital from 1995, city officials said Tuesday. The 20,000-capacity Charley Stadium will host this season's Grand Prix finals Sept. 3. Joel Laine, sports director to Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac, said the city also expected to reclaim the annual international athletics meeting it lost to Lille six years ago. "This meeting should be repatriated to Paris from July 1995," he said. The event, now upgrades to Grand Prix circuit status, has been staged at the Stadium Nord in Villejuve D'Asco near Lille since 1988. Laine said the Lille region would undoubtedly resist any move to wrest the event back to Paris. "It's true they have invested heavily in it but we can't leave Paris without a major competition. Even if we don't get it, we'll create a new event," he added.

Romanians threaten to ban Astafei

BUCHAREST (R) — Romanian athletics bosses said Tuesday they will ban high jumper Alina Astafei from competition for refusing to appear for Romania in last weekend's European indoor championships in Paris. "Alina Astafei missed a prestigious indoor competition and, worst of all, she has no credible reason for being absent," Traian Badea, secretary of the Romanian Track and Field Federation (RTFF), said. "Romania lost a probable gold medal ... because of Alina's absence. Astafei, the Barcelona Olympic silver medalist, has moved to Germany and says she wants to get German citizenship. 'We have no right to stop Alina choosing the citizenship she wants,' Badea said. "But we have the possibility to ban her from all official contests and we'll do it." Under International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) rules, Astafei faces a ban of between one and three years.

Melbourne to host Grand Prix in 1996

ADELAIDE, Australia (AP) — The Australian Formula One Grand Prix auto race will switch from Adelaide to Melbourne in 1996, the South Australian State government announced Tuesday. State Premier Dean Brown said the South Australian and Victorian State governments and the Formula One Constructors Association had reached an agreement to allow the race to be run in Adelaide, about 805 kilometres west of Sydney, this year and in 1995, then move to Melbourne in 1996. As part of the deal, the Melbourne race organisers will buy equipment from Adelaide, including stands, fencing and barriers, and will help promote the two remaining races in Adelaide. The race originally was scheduled to switch from Adelaide to Melbourne, about 320 kilometres to the southeast, in 1997.

Luton holds West Ham to goalless tie

LONDON (AP) — Division one Luton held West Ham to a goalless tie Monday in a Football Association Cup quarterfinal game, leaving Chelsea waiting to know who it will meet in a semifinal at Wembley. Some 27,000 fans at Upton Park saw West Ham's Mike Marsh hit the Luton post three minutes before half time and clear a header from the visitor's Des Linton off his own line in the 62nd. West Ham defender Alvin Martin almost sliced an attempted clearance into his own net and David Preece and Scott Oakes both went close to grabbing a late winner for the visitor. The two teams will meet again at Luton's Kenilworth Road Stadium March 23. The winner meets Chelsea at Wembley April 9 with Manchester United facing Oldham in the second semifinal in the same stadium a day later. The final is at Wembley May 14.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TAMAR HIRSCH
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DON'T MISS YOUR FREE SHOT

Neither vulnerable. South deals. and the jump to game was automatic.

West led the queen of clubs and, since that virtually marked East with the ace, it was ducked all round. Since there was no way to avoid losing two heart tricks, which would complete the defenders' book, declarer could not afford any other losers. Therefore, a finesse for the king of diamonds had to succeed.

Dummy's two entries must be used to take diamond finesses, so there's no way that South can take advantage of a 3-3 heart split to set up a long heart. It might seem that the only hope is a 3-3 diamond break.

Be careful not to overlook one other chance. If diamonds are 4-3 and the hand that's short in diamonds has only two trumps, the contract is still home.

With careful timing, declarer can test both lines. After ruffing the club continuation, declarer crosses to the table with a high trump and takes a diamond finesse. Dummy's other high trump serves as an entry for a second finesse. Before drawing the last trump, declarer cashes the ace of diamonds. If the cards are as above, West shows out, but can't ruff, so declarer can trump the low diamond and claim the contract.

The bidding:

South: 1♣, 2♣, 3♣, 4♣, 5♣, 6♣, 7♣, 8♣, 9♣, 10♣, 11♣, 12♣, 13♣, 14♣, 15♣, 16♣, 17♣, 18♣, 19♣, 20♣, 21♣, 22♣, 23♣, 24♣, 25♣, 26♣, 27♣, 28♣, 29♣, 30♣, 31♣, 32♣, 33♣, 34♣, 35♣, 36♣, 37♣, 38♣, 39♣, 40♣, 41♣, 42♣, 43♣, 44♣, 45♣, 46♣, 47♣, 48♣, 49♣, 50♣, 51♣, 52♣, 53♣, 54♣, 55♣, 56♣, 57♣, 58♣, 59♣, 60♣, 61♣, 62♣, 63♣, 64♣, 65♣, 66♣, 67♣, 68♣, 69♣, 70♣, 71♣, 72♣, 73♣, 74♣, 75♣, 76♣, 77♣, 78♣, 79♣, 80♣, 81♣, 82♣, 83♣, 84♣, 85♣, 86♣, 87♣, 88♣, 89♣, 90♣, 91♣, 92♣, 93♣, 94♣, 95♣, 96♣, 97♣, 98♣, 99♣, 100♣, 101♣, 102♣, 103♣, 104♣, 105♣, 106♣, 107♣, 108♣, 109♣, 110♣, 111♣, 112♣, 113♣, 114♣, 115♣, 116♣, 117♣, 118♣, 119♣, 120♣, 121♣, 122♣, 123♣, 124♣, 125♣, 126♣, 127♣, 128♣, 129♣, 130♣, 131♣, 132♣, 133♣, 134♣, 135♣, 136♣, 137♣, 138♣, 139♣, 140♣, 141♣, 142♣, 143♣, 144♣, 145♣, 146♣, 147♣, 148♣, 149♣, 150♣, 151♣, 152♣, 153♣, 154♣, 155♣, 156♣, 157♣, 158♣, 159♣, 160♣, 161♣, 162♣, 163♣, 164♣, 165♣, 166♣, 167♣, 168♣, 169♣, 170♣, 171♣, 172♣, 173♣, 174♣, 175♣, 176♣, 177♣, 178♣, 179♣, 180♣, 181♣, 182♣, 183♣, 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Diego Maradona begins training for World Cup

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Troubled Argentine soccer star Diego Maradona began training for the World Cup Monday after meeting with national team coach Alfio Basile.

"I felt very good, taking into account that it's been a while since I've done anything," Maradona told a local radio station after running 45 minutes with teammate Oscar Ruggeri at the national team's training site. "At the end, as is logical, I was tired."

Maradona was one of 19 players named Sunday by Basile for a March 23 friendly match between Brazil and Argentina in Recife, Brazil. "I won't be in good shape, but I could join the bench and play some minutes," Maradona said on a television show Sunday night.

Maradona and Basile met before the player's training session to "clear up everything we had to clear up," Maradona said. He did not elaborate.

Maradona, 33, had not played

ed or practised since he left the Argentine league team Newell's Old Boys six weeks ago, citing nagging leg injuries. He last played for the national team against Australia in November.

On Feb. 2, the day after he and Newell's announced their separation, Maradona shot at journalists outside his home with a compressed-air rifle. Five of them were slightly injured by the pellets. A criminal court judge is expected to question Maradona about the incident Tuesday.

Five days later, after trying to escape the media, Maradona scuffled with a journalist in a restaurant in Oriente, 280 miles (450 kilometres) south of Buenos Aires.

Since then, he has remained out of the public eye, and until Monday had made little effort to get into playing condition. Several times in recent years the 5-foot-5 (1.65-metre) midfielder has ballooned and then lost weight through intense training and crash diets.

Harding headhunted to wrestle in Japan

TOKYO (R) — A top Japanese pro-wrestling group said Tuesday it is trying to lure controversial figure skater Tonya Harding with promises of contract money exceeding Nancy Kerrigan's deal with Walt Disney.

"We first want to invite Harding to our match on March 27," said a spokesman for the all-Japan women's pro-wrestling organisation, one of four groups which put up teams in the women's league.

"Then she can make up her own mind after seeing the situation for herself."

"She was born to be a pro-wrestler," Japanese tabloids quoted the organisation chairman, Takashi Matsunaga, as saying. "She's physically fit and used to adverse circumstances."

Like its male counterpart, women's pro-wrestling is closer to show business than sport. In Japan, about 60 women wrestlers compete in muscle power, provocative or devilish costumes, and even personal theme songs, some of which make the charts.

The spokesman said his group was ready to offer Harding a contract worth 200 million yen (\$1.9 million) with further promises of "fight money" of about 40 million yen (\$380,000) a year.

Harding is scheduled to arrive in Japan late this week to take part in the March 20-27 figure skating championships in Chiba, outside Tokyo. The group said that, so far, Harding had not responded to calls from its agent in the United States.

Indian Cultural Gathering

The Indian community in Jordan is holding a cultural gathering on Friday, March 18. All Indians are invited to attend.

Venue: The Indian Embassy premises, the First Circle.

Time: Events start at 12 noon sharp.

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Agassi's game, and his tongue, too sharp for Becker and coach

KEY BISCAYNE, Fla. (AP) — Boris Becker and Nick Bollettieri never had a chance Monday against Andre Agassi. His game and tongue were just too sharp.

Only ballgirl Stephanie Flaherty gave Agassi any trouble in the third round of the Lipton championships.

Flaherty, captain of her high school tennis team in Miami Lakes, won a point against Agassi after a frustrated Becker asked her to replace him. "I told her, 'Play another point. Maybe you are going to get a game,'" Becker said. "But she was too embarrassed."

So Becker returned to the court, and Agassi completed a near-perfect performance for a 6-2, 7-5 victory.

When Agassi was done slamming winners, he took aim at Bollettieri, who severed their 10-year player-coach relationship last summer. Bollettieri now coaches Becker.

"Nick is insignificant, to be quite honest," Agassi said. "His knowledge of the game is limited, there's no question about that. If you're ever wondering how much he knows, go play him a set of tennis. But he can sell himself pretty well."

And that's just what Bollettieri did after watching the match.

"I'll be coming out with my book in six to nine months," he said. "It'll have a full chapter on Andre."

No. 6 seed Michael Chang joined Agassi in the fourth round by rallying to beat Alberto Berasategui of Spain 1-6, 6-4, 6-2. Chang was serving and trailing in the second set 0-3, 15-40, and overcame three break points to start a turnaround.

"I was very fortunate to come out of that one," Chang said. "I look at it more as a gift from the man upstairs."

Jim Grabb, ranked no. 185, upset no. 4 Sergi Bruguera 7-6 (7-4), 6-3. Top-ranked Pete Sampras beat David Wheaton 6-0, 5-7, 6-1; no. 3 Stefan Edberg beat Jason Stoltenberg 7-6 (7-3), 6-1; and no. 5 Jim Courier beat Andrei Cherkasov 6-3, 7-5.

Top-ranked Steffi Graf ex-



Andre Agassi

tended her winning streaks to 29 consecutive matches and 51 sets by beating Amy Frazier 6-3, 6-0. No. 2 Arantxa Sanchez Vicario swept Lori McNeil 6-2, 6-1.

Agassi's win was almost that lopsided as he beat Becker for the seventh straight time. No other player has given the German so much trouble.

"Andre was really in his zone and couldn't miss a ball," Becker said. "He was hitting as hard as possible, and I served 115 MPH serves and he just put them back like nothing."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Policeman killed in southern Egypt

CAIRO (AP) — Two suspected Muslim extremists shot and killed a policeman Tuesday at a village near the southern city of Assiut, police said. The killing follows the pattern of attacks by Al Gamaa Al Islamiyah, which has waged a two-year campaign of violence to destabilise the government. A policeman was also killed Sunday near Assiut. In Tuesday's shooting, the unidentified attackers gunned down policeman Mohammad Fathi, 48, and escaped with his pistol. The killing was in the village of Walidia, about 320 kilometres south of Cairo. It is one of the extremists' strongholds, and 119 people were arrested there last month.

Egyptian theologian answers critics

CAIRO (R) — The head of Egypt's top institute of Muslim learning, responding to complaints of censorship by theologians, said his institute had a duty to protect intellectual life from deviant opinions. Gad Al Haq Ali Gad Al Haq, sheikh of Al Azhar, said in an interview published on Tuesday the row over Al Azhar's censorship role is the artificial creation of writers who wanted to "insult" Islam. In a little-publicised ruling last month, a branch of the council of state, the equivalent of a supreme court, said Al Azhar had the sole right to decide on the Islamic content of films and television programmes. Intellectuals have criticised the ruling, saying it gives Al Azhar too much power. They also object to Al Azhar's well-established role in censoring books. But Sheikh Al Haq told the international Arabic newspaper Sharq Al Awsat: "Al Azhar does not confiscate anyone's thought and does not represent an obstacle to opinion... When Al Azhar points out that certain books are deviant... it is preserving intellectual life and protecting correct thought and right opinion. In the same way as we immunise man from diseases, we must immunise our intellectual and cultural life from perverted thoughts and deviant opinions which lead people astray and give Muslims doubts about their faith and the religious law."

'Russian gas blast deliberate'

MOSCOW (R) — A Gas explosion that killed 11 people in Russia's central region of Bashkortostan on Saturday was set off deliberately, ITAR-TASS news agency quoted local police as saying on Tuesday. They gave no further details. The state emergency committee in Moscow was unable to confirm the report immediately. TASS also quoted police as saying three children were among those killed in the blast, which ripped through a two-storey block of flats in Glagoveshchens, about 20 kilometres north of the regional capital Ufa. Ten people were injured.

Mexican financier missing

MEXICO CITY (R) — A leading Mexican financier and one of the country's richest men has gone missing and rumours have been circulating in financial circles that he has been kidnapped, his company said. Mexican financial group Banamex-Accival, in a brief statement, said the whereabouts of company President Alfredo Harp Elu were unknown. But the company, responding to rumours that Mr. Harp may have been kidnapped Monday in Mexico City, released a statement saying it had no confirmation that he had been kidnapped.

Belarus adopts new constitution

MINSK (AP) — Lawmakers approved Belarus' first post-Soviet constitution Tuesday and called elections for president and parliament later this year. The constitution seeks to shed the legacy of decades of Soviet rule, declaring that Belarus is "a free, ... democratic state," and guaranteeing individuals the right to own land. It also states the goal of becoming a non-nuclear, neutral country. Belarus, located on Russia's western border, is one of four former Soviet republics to inherit nuclear weapons after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Nigerian found near Syria-Lebanon border

BEIRUT (AP) — A 24-year-old Nigerian was found dead Tuesday near the Lebanese-Syrian border in what is suspected to be a homicide, authorities said. Police said the man, identified as Omar Umar al-Lah, was found in the early morning in the eastern Lebanese village of Meshfeh near the border. A coroner said the man had been dead for two days. The cause of death was a blow to the back of the head. A Nigerian passport on the victim showed he entered Syria through Damascus airport March 5, police said. Thousands of illegal labourers from Africa use the Lebanese-Syrian border to sneak into Lebanon in search of work.

U.S. Navy rescues six fishermen

BAHRAIN (AP) — A U.S. destroyer Tuesday rescued six Kuwaiti fishermen whose boat had been left drifting in the Gulf because of engine trouble. A Navy statement said the USS Harry W. Hill picked up a distress signal and sent out a helicopter that spotted the disabled boat at dawn 50 kilometres off Kuwait. The fishermen suffered from dehydration and one, aged 40, was in serious condition. He was flown by helicopter to Kuwait. The Harry W. Hill's home port is San Diego.

Nigerian students face execution

LAGOS (R) — Twenty-four students of the University of Lagos, charged with involvement in a weekend following cult clashes, have been charged with murder, court officials said on Tuesday. The students, who face the death penalty if convicted, included officials of the students union, which has been spearheading a purge against secret cults accused of terrorising the campus community. The students, who pleaded not guilty, were arrested on Saturday while ransacking the homes of parents whose children they alleged were cult members. They were charged on Monday with robbing two men of property worth \$80,000 naira (\$40,000) while armed with machetes and other dangerous weapons. The court officials said.

Zhirinovskiy gives Nixon letter for Clinton

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian internationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy met privately with Richard Nixon on Tuesday and gave him a message to deliver to U.S. President Bill Clinton, the ITAR-TASS news agency reported. Details of the message were not disclosed. Mr. Zhirinovskiy, the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, and Mr. Nixon discussed U.S.-Russia relations and various political problems during their meeting in Mr. Nixon's hotel suite, the news agency said. The former U.S. president was to meet later with Nikolai Travkin, head of the Democratic Party of Russia, before heading for Ukraine on Wednesday and a meeting with President Leonid Kravchuk.

21% of Russian MPs want Alaska back

MOSCOW (R) — One Russian parliamentary deputy in five believes Alaska should be part of Russia, not the United States, according to an opinion poll published Tuesday. The Mneniyi Poll Service said it had surveyed almost half the 444 members of the Russian parliament. The poll found that 21 per cent of the MPs believed Alaska should be part of Russia. The poll also found that 50 per cent of the MPs believed the United States should pay \$100 million to the United States for the oil-rich northern territory which became the 49th state of the Union on Jan. 3, 1959.

Algerian media say 150 attackers overran prison

ALGIERS (Agencies) — The assault which freed more than 900 inmates from a high-security prison was mounted by more than 150 well-prepared attackers transported in 40 trucks, Algerian newspapers reported Tuesday.

The reports, including one in the state-run daily Al Mujahid, provided the first detailed accounts of the spectacular attack Thursday by Muslim fundamentalist commandos on the Tazult prison, 400 kilometres southeast of Algiers.

Al Mujahid said the attackers invaded the prison only after taking control of the nearby village to prevent guards living there from getting back to their posts. A heavy construction vehicle was placed across the road linking the prison to the town, the newspaper said.

Liberte, an independent daily, said 909 inmates escaped, including 70 who had been sentenced to death. Al Mujahid, without giving figures, said the condemned prisoners included fundamentalists sentenced by special anti-terrorism courts set up since Islamic militants began an insurgency two years ago.

A manhunt was underway throughout the mountainous eastern region of Aures for the escapes and the attackers. Security forces announced Monday that they had killed 24 escapees, captured 79 and seized a large quantity of arms. One guard and five attackers were killed in the attack, the Justice Ministry reported over the weekend. Four guards were wounded and seven kidnapped.

Al Mujahid reported that several hours before the escape, residents of Tazult noticed a large number of unfamiliar young men in the town who were assumed to be gathering to celebrate the upcoming end of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

The newspaper said three of attackers' trucks drove right into the prison compound, thanks to help from two guards who were accomplices. It said the operation lasted 75 minutes.

Nails, rocks and the bulldozer blocked the access road from the nearby village of Tazult. The guerrillas tore up the road to Batna town to prevent security forces reaching the prison. "Two hundred assailants arrived in 40 trucks and left after freeing about 1,000 prisoners and carrying off 100 war weapons," Liberte said. Al Mujahid added that the raid was carried out with "the complicity of a penitentiary official who opened the gates to allow the armed groups to enter."

"To cover their flight, the assailants tore up the road linking Lambese to Batna over a stretch of 15 kilometres and strewn it with nails," Liberte said.

The fortress — also known by its French name Lambese — was built by the colonial authorities in the 19th century as a top security prison on a rocky pinnacle above Tazult in the foothills of the Aures Mountains.

"A few hours before the escape Tazult villagers noticed feverish activity. A number of

young men thought to be people from Batna shopping before the end (of the Ramadan fast)," Al Mujahid said.

"Nobody thought the covered trucks contained armed men waiting for the end of the fast to start the operation," the paper said.

"This operation is the worst humiliation experienced by the authorities, whose absence in the security sector in recent weeks reduces what little credit they enjoyed," commented the Al Watan.

A commission of inquiry has been set up "to shed light on the conditions of the escape from the Tazult prison and establish responsibilities," APS said.

Liberte newspaper said "combined security forces were deployed immediately and continue to search the Aures region." The radio said security forces had surrounded the whole Aures region.

The radio spoke of four warders collaborating with the gunmen but made no mention of any being killed.

The jail, one of Algeria's toughest, was built by the French in the 19th century to take prisoners condemned to death.

It is one of several where hundreds of militants have been held since political violence broke out in Algeria two years ago.

Algerian newspapers said the gunmen ringed the jail, took control and then took away the prisoners in trucks. The prison, they said, had 3,000 inmates. Some common criminals were returned after the breakout, they added.

Allies and enemies rally behind Geagea

BEIRUT (R) — Right-wing Maronite Catholics have rallied behind their onetime warlord against a government clampdown, charging authorities with torture and human rights abuses against former Christian militiamen.

Traditional Maronite foes of Samir Geagea, leader of Lebanese Forces (LF), joined his supporters in loud protests that accused the half-Christian, half-Muslim government of bias against Maronites.

It was the first show of solidarity by the splintered rightist Maronites since the 1990 end of the 15-year civil war.

Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, a Sunni Muslim, called a crisis meeting Tuesday of top security officials to discuss the army's restrictions outside the Geagea's headquarters in the hills of Ghidras about 30 kilometres northeast of Beirut.

Mr. Hariri had cut short a holiday in Saudi Arabia to celebrate 'Eid Al Fitr and returned to Lebanon Sunday night because of the crisis in the Christian heartland, sources close to the prime minister said. They spoke on condition of anonymity.

Dr. Geagea headed the main rightist fighting machine during the civil war. He voluntarily disbanded his 6,000-strong militia in 1991 under an Arab League-brokered peace accord that gave Muslims an equal share of power with the long-dominant Christians.

The main Muslim civil war militias also disbanded in Beirut and the hinterland southeast of the capital. But the Iranian-backed Hizbollah (Party of God) retained its weapons in east and south Lebanon to wage a guerrilla war to dislodge Israeli occupation troops from a southern border strip.

Maronite politicians and spiritual leaders viewed military restrictions on access to Mr. Geagea's headquarters since Thursday as discrimination against Christians while Hizbollah's heavily armed irregulars runs a state within a state in east Lebanon.

The army, which is a mixed Muslim and Christian force, said in a communique that the restrictions were part of a security dragnet after bomb scares sparked by a Feb. 27 explosion that killed 10 worshippers at a church in Jounieh north of Beirut.

About two dozen arrests were made. Dr. Geagea said most of the detainees were Lebanese Forces partisans, labelling the house raids as a "flagrant abuse of human rights."

None has been charged and Dr. Geagea denied his group's involvement in any security breach since it was



Samir Geagea

officially licensed to operate as a political party after the war.

The most vociferous protesters were Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir, spiritual head of the one million Maronites of Lebanon, and parliament members representing the Kesrouan province, the main Maronite stronghold.

"We have heard many things about beatings and torture of detainees. This is unacceptable and we are going to follow this thing up," said Kesrouan Deputy Irshad Al Khazen after a meeting with Dr. Geagea in Ghidras Monday.

The patriarch warned of "grave consequences" if authorities persisted in the crackdown. "Harassment could lead to defiance," Mr. Sfeir threatened in his Sunday sermon at his seat in Bkerri in Kesrouan.

Deputy August Bakhos, a Maronite who heads parliament's justice affairs committee, denounced as "illegal" the arrests of Lebanese Forces partisans and the anti-Geagea restrictions.

Even George Saadeh, the leader of the Falange Party from which the Lebanese Forces broke away, buried the hatchet with Dr. Geagea and deplored "the one-sided measures."

"If the measures are implemented only on one party then we say no to such measures," said Farouk Abi Lamaa, a onetime close aide to exiled army General Michel Aoun, who is Dr. Geagea's most implacable foe.

Apparently to appease the Maronites, the government's military prosecutor instructed security forces to "search and arrest all armed men who demonstrated in East Lebanon's town of Baalbek Friday."

It was referring to hundreds of Hizbollah gunmen who took to the streets in full military gear to stage an anti-Israeli parade.

Explosives defused outside British rail station

SEVEN OAKS, England (AP) — Rail travel between London and the southern commuter belt was disrupted Tuesday morning after police found an explosive device near the tracks outside the Seven Oaks rail station.

British Transport police said the device was found on an embankment under a bridge. It was made safe by bomb disposal officers and no one was injured, police said.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for planting the device and the police spokesman said no warning was given.

Train travel was halted through the busy station, 35 kilometres southeast of London.

Flights were back to normal Tuesday at London's Heathrow airport as hundreds of police combed the area around the airport for more hidden IRA mortar bombs.

The Irish Republican Army (IRA) launched three mortar attacks on the airport in five days, the last one Sunday morning. No one was injured in the attacks and no damage done but flights were cancelled and delayed.

In Belfast, Northern Ireland's police said the IRA had developed a new light-sensitive detonator for bombs that could be accidentally triggered by car headlights or similar means.

"By placing the units in the community the terrorist is playing with the lives of the people," Chief Superintendent Terry Houston told a Belfast news conference.

"The likelihood of any bomb or other explosive device being detonated prematurely by one of the accidental methods causes us such concern that we must make the community aware of its existence," he said.

Mr. Houston said a small, American-made black box — a "photoflash slave unit" — has been adapted by the IRA to trigger several devices in recent weeks.

The Californian-made device can be used to set off a bomb remotely from up to 800 metres but could also be triggered by car headlights, ambulance lights or even the infrared beam used to centrally lock cars, Mr. Houston said.

A hand in front of the unit, holding the box or dropping a small stone on it could also accidentally trip the mechanism.

The IRA was using the device to remotely detonate bombs from a safe distance. In the past, the guerrillas have used bombs set off by wires or timers.



A man digs among the debris and oil from a burning tanker which collided with a cargo ship in the Bosphorus Straits on Monday (AFP photo)

Bosphorus to stay shut until tanker fire is out

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkey said on Tuesday that the Bosphorus Strait, one of the world's busiest shipping channels, would remain shut until an oil tanker fire that killed at least 15 people had been totally extinguished.

With firemen still fighting to control the blaze on board the Cyprus-registered Nassia, Environment Minister Riza Akcali said rescuers were looking for up to 16 missing seamen from the tanker and a second vessel with which it was in collision.

"It will definitely stay shut to traffic for some time, at least until the fire on the tanker was totally put out," Mr. Akcali told Reuters by telephone.

Abraham Tez, state minister for maritime affairs, said earlier it could take up to 10 days to extinguish the fire.

The Nassia, carrying Russian crude oil, and the Shipbroker, a Cyprus-flagged dry cargo vessel, collided on Sunday night in the Bosphorus which dissects Istanbul, a city of 10 million people.

Mr. Akcali, quoted by Anatolian news agency later, said the tanker was under control with no danger of drifting. "The extinguishing work is going on. No explosions are expected... firemen are spraying foam to douse the fire from both sides of the tanker," he added.

Mr. Akcali told Reuters two tugboats from the Aegean refinery of Aliaga and two others from southern Yumurtalik port were sailing to join rescue efforts at the scene, off Poyrazkoy at the Black Sea mouth of the 30-kilometre strait, near Istanbul.

"Firemen and domestic and international rescue crews are working to recover bodies of seamen. The death toll is still 15," he added.

The accident was the worst in the Bosphorus since a 1979 collision where an oil tanker exploded, killing 43 seamen.

The Nassia had been bound for Genoa after loading 98,500 tonnes of crude oil at the Russian terminal of Novorossiysk.

Mr. Akcali said a 12-member team sent by the Dutch firm Smit Tak BV had arrived in Istanbul to help put out the fire.

An official from the private maritime firm Zihni Denizcilik, agent for the tanker, said a Greek ship, which he named as the Mega-Alexandros, was to arrive at the strait later in the day.

"It is the best equipped vessel in the world and will initially remain at stand-by. If needed, it will also be used to extinguish the fire and to tow the tanker, the official, who asked not to be identified, told Reuters.

He said a greater hazard from fire was averted thanks to an inert gas system in the tanker that prevented oxygen in the tanks from flaring up and to a southwestern wind, still blowing over the strait.

"The strait cannot be opened until the fire is completely extinguished," he said.

Private television channel ATV said the oil slick from the Nassia was spreading south towards Istanbul, another private channel, HBB TV, quoted officials as saying that the fire was partly under control.

Indo-Pak nuclear war unlikely — think-tank

NEW DELHI (AP) — Despite heightened tensions between India and Pakistan, the chances of war in the next decade are low, according to a semi-official Indian think-tank.

Nuclear weapons have reduced the threat of war, said a report by the Institute of Defence Studies. Neither India nor Pakistan will scale back their nuclear programmes, although the pressure to do so will increase.

The report said the existence of nuclear weapons "would place severe limitations on future conventional inter-state wars." If one did break out, it would last no more than a week, said the report written by the director of the government-funded institute, Jasjit Singh. The report was released last week.

Relations worsened this year after fresh rows over Kashmir. Last week Pakistan lost a bid to get the United Nations to condemn India for alleged human rights violations by troops in Kashmir.

While both countries deny they possess nuclear weapons, the report assumed that they do.

Western countries have asked the arch-rivals to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to open nuclear power plants and laboratories to international inspection.

India says it cannot sign and close its nuclear options because neighbouring China and

Pakistan have nuclear weapons. Pakistan refused to sign until India does so.

India and Pakistan have gone to war three times since colonial India was partitioned at the end of British rule in 1947. Researchers have claimed that they nearly went to war again in 1990, this time with nuclear weapons. India denied it.

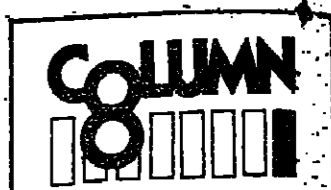
The institute's report warned against China's growing military strength. Its 1994 defence budget was increased by 25 per cent and is the highest since 1979.

Although India and China have improved ties since a war in 1962, the report identified China as the "primary strategic challenge."

Chinese modernisation "would have a spinoff benefit for Pakistan," Mr. Singh wrote, since China helps Pakistan's missile programme.

Mr. Singh warned Indian defence planners against lowering their guard by reducing spending without cutting back on troop strength.

To remain battle-worthy and maintain standards at the present levels of spending, India needs to either reduce its 1.1 million strong military by half and instead upgrade its tanks, ships and fighter jets. Defence spending has dropped from four per cent of the gross domestic product in the 80s to about 2.5 per cent.



Yeltsin offers olive branch to Nixon

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin has extended an olive branch to former U.S. leader Richard Nixon, whom he had angrily refused to meet earlier this week, saying the incident was over. Mr. Yeltsin had snubbed Mr. Nixon because of a visit by the visiting 81-year-old to some of the Russian president's worst political foes. The official ITAR-TASS agency quoted sources from the Kremlin as saying Mr. Yeltsin himself would not be able to meet Mr. Nixon because his mother-in-law had just died. But, it added, Mr. Nixon could meet other top officials. A furious Yeltsin took away Mr. Nixon's official car and escorts Wednesday and cancelled his official meetings because the former U.S. president had first met Russia's former Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi on coming to Moscow. Mr. Rutskoi was freed from jail against Mr. Yeltsin's wishes last month, under a sweeping parliamentary amnesty for leaders of an armed uprising against Mr. Yeltsin last October. TASS quoted Kremlin sources as saying: "President Yeltsin considers this incident, as a result of which he refused to receive former U.S. President Nixon, as over."

"The president has spoken in favour of meetings between Nixon and representatives of different branches of power in Russia. The president himself, though, will not be able to receive Nixon because his mother-in-law died recently."

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27 parties
JOHANNESBURG (R) — The final deadline to sign up for a first all-race election passed on Wednesday, confirming that the new movement, the African National Congress (ANC), would not register as a political party. The white right-wing Front of Freedom (FF) General Council, who broke with rights activists to back demands for homeland, met for registering freedom. From Joseph Chole, a leader of parliament, apartheid Congress and the front was personal and private.

Kazakhstan
ALMA ATA (R) — Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan's president, has granted his cabinet the right to decide on the world's most dangerous nuclear arsenal. The world's most dangerous nuclear arsenal, the Semipalatinsk test site, is located in Kazakhstan. The world's most dangerous nuclear arsenal, the Semipalatinsk test site, is located in Kazakhstan.

Slovak president
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Tunisia enters
TUNIS (R) — Wednesday it began a post-oil era after oil imports from Iraq were cut off. Tunisia's oil imports from Iraq were cut off. Tunisia's oil imports from Iraq were cut off. Tunisia's oil imports from Iraq were cut off.

Games in Gu
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